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HELEN MULGRAVE;

OR,

JESUIT · EXECUTORSHIP :

BEING PASSAGES IN THE LIFE OF

A SECEDER FROM ROMANISM.

An Autobiography.

"The net has fallen upon me ; I shall perish  
Under device and practice."

*Shakespeare.*



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# HELEN MULGRAVE ;

OR,

## JESUIT EXECUTORSHIP.

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### CHAPTER I.

Ye household deities, whose guardian eye  
Mark'd each pure thought ere register'd on high,  
Still, still, ye walk the consecrated ground,  
And breathe the soul of inspiration round !

ROGERS

As an autobiographer is expected to say something of his birth, parentage, and education, I will begin my narrative with some particulars of mine, in the relation of which I shall endeavor to be brief.

My father and mother, who were Irish, were both Roman Catholics by hereditary descent ; their families, for several generations, having been born in the Romish church.

My father, who inherited from his ancestors an ancient baronetcy, had two brothers. At the time of the opening of this narrative, the elder of the two was a barrister residing in London, where he had married an English Protestant heiress. The younger was a bishop in the Roman Catholic church, living in the neighbourhood of Cork.

My mother, the only daughter of an old Irish family, of high descent, but of little hereditary property, had two brothers, who early in life had become adventurers for fame and fortune on the continent. Each had distinguished himself in his career ; the one as a soldier, the other as a civilian. The elder of the two, the Baron de Wallenstein, resided in Vienna, and held high office under the Austrian government. The younger, the Count

de Carryfort, lived in Paris, retired from his profession, and in possession of a competent fortune.

My father, Sir William Mulgrave, occupying an old ancestral castle near the lakes of Killarney, with a beloved wife and four children, was for many years one of the happiest men in existence.

If it should be thought that want of foresight, or omission of calculation, undermined his fortune and destroyed his happiness, it must be recollected that he but resembled many of his countrymen, whose warm and generous natures seem formed for anything but self-preservation.

My father was, in truth, a genuine Irish gentleman of the 'olden times,' without his vices, but wedded, nevertheless, to the habits of his class and country; and being utterly unaware that the sordid changes going on in the world were encroaching, in hostile spirit, on his own domain, he perceived not the new position in which they placed him, and therefore never defended himself against their consequences.

Mulgrave Castle, the name of our residence, stood on a lofty eminence, commanding views of surpassing beauty. It was a building of extensive dimensions, exhibiting a variety of architecture, from the various modifications it had undergone in passing through a long line of possessors; who, it appeared, had not always adapted their amendments to the original character of the building. But though uniformity was wanting, and its lofty towers had dwindled to mere turrets, and its old fortress to mutilated crumbling stones, so as to make the name of castle a sort of misnomer, it had so striking a cast of reverend age about it as to give dignity to its decay, and render it captivating to the taste of the beholder, and dear to the hearts of the numerous peasantry of the demesne, who vied with each other in rehearsing legends of its former exploits and its ancient honours.

Our extensive park, rich in large and lofty trees, was an appropriate accessory to the castle and its luxuriant gardens. In the latter, owing to the mild climate of the south of Ireland, both flowers and fruits of the tenderest kinds flourished in the open air.

The traditions of our locality were as numerous as the birds

that in summer months sang in its woods. As children, both my sisters and myself were not only infected with this lore, but deep in its mysteries. It was, indeed, a source of perennial pleasure to us. We believed in fairies, and other similar beings, who participated with us the occupation of the castle, and glided, side by side, with us over the mountain tops, or through the silent glens of our wide domain. We were thus familiarized, as it were, with invisible things, and learned to recognise everywhere, sometimes with fluttering hearts, existences discernible only by the imaginative or superstitious.

Our house had its haunted apartments, and I never crossed its spacious gothic hall, lighted but by a single lamp, on a winter's evening, but with a breathlessness not to be forgotten.

The mounting of the wide staircase was a still greater trial of fortitude, for there life-size saints and heroes stood in niches on its landings; and painted windows sometimes imparted appalling hues to the moonbeams that lit up their marble forms.

But even terror, if not intense, has charms for the volatile and wonder-loving nature of childhood; and as I recall the fleeting emotions—half-painful, half-pleasurable—inspired by its fancies and its fears, I feel a fondness for their memory, and a regret for the transitoriness of their existence. Charming chimeras! whither have ye all flown? Have ye no affinity with the care-worn heart? no mission from your dreamy world to a soul battling with the iron realities of life?

My father's fortune was large, his servants numerous, and the hangers-on of the family innumerable. In addition to these were many peasant and pauper families, who, though not located within the limits of his domain, claimed and received from his bounty a constant supply of their ever-increasing wants.

As such charities had been, time immemorial, amongst the usages of the house, my father considered them as indispensable; and their curtailment was never thought of, although the growing indolence of their recipients increased with the amount of his gifts.

There were also other drains on my father's revenues, quite as exhausting as those of charity. Of their united effects I shall have occasion to speak hereafter.



We had an old woman in the house, for many years, who had been my father's foster-mother. Her daughter, a remarkable character, even in childhood, had extorted from her foster-brother an education at a boarding-school, far superior to her condition, which had placed her in so false a position with all around her, as to make her, on her return to her mother at the completion of it, the torment of the house. It became, at length, necessary for the peace of the subordinate part of the household, to eject both her and her mother.

They were placed in a small cottage allotted them by my father, about four or five miles distant from the castle, just without the boundary of the park.

For some years after this, the juvenile part of our household, at least, lost sight of them. Meanwhile, they became a greater torment than ever to my father, upon whose generous disposition they well knew how to play. But of them no more at present.

My father was a man who possessed a thousand fine and interesting qualities, besides the unbounded benevolence of which I have spoken. He was not one of those boisterous country gentlemen, who are distinguished from the rustics around them by nothing but their superior garb and their despotic manners; for, though he relished field-sports, and loved the simplicity of a country life, he was a polished gentleman.

He possessed sterling integrity; and the lofty tone of his morals gave dignity even to the carriage of his person. A deeply-rooted principle of duty, which never allowed inclination to triumph over it, except in one single, though fatal point—*expenditure*—was the pervading spirit of his life; while high and generous feeling, amounting almost to the romantic, shed a brilliancy over his manners that rendered him captivating and irresistible, both in public and in private life.

He was accustomed to enter, with the ardour and the relish of youth, into the occupations and pursuits of his children, taking the lead in their amusements; and superintending their studies. How could they help doting on such a father? He was at once the head and the idol of the house.

My mother's character was one of harmony and sweetness.

Without possessing any brilliant qualities, the equanimity of her temper, and the consistency of her deportment, rendered her as much an object of attachment in her own sphere as my father was in his. She possessed both cultivation and taste, but she entertained so exalted an opinion of her husband, that it was her pleasure to yield to him every questioned point; so that her wishes and her will seemed ever in unison with his.

My sisters and I had for some years been under the tuition of an English governess, a Miss White, who had been educated in a convent in France, and was considered highly accomplished in 'French, music, dancing, and drawing.'

My brother's tutor, who was also English, was a Mr. Rivers, who, unusual as it may seem in a Catholic family, was a Protestant, and an M.A. of Oxford. It was part of his duty to assist Miss White in instructing my sisters and myself in the solid parts of our education.

During the winter we lived as a family, very much apart from the society of our neighbourhood, owing to there being but few residents of our church and class within visiting distance.

The tenor of our life, at this season, was therefore uniform, but never dull. My sisters and myself had been early trained to horsemanship, and we rode constantly, and became so much inured to the vicissitudes of weather as not to be affected by them.

We partook, with my father and brother, of every out-door amusement, except the chase. Sometimes we skated on waters found on the summits of the neighbouring mountains, or chased each other up their rocky acclivities with the swiftness of deer. When the weather was too severe to be braved, we had resources within doors which kept us always occupied.

Not the least of these was music, for which some of us had a decided talent, and which, cultivated by Miss White, might have enabled us to attain excellence. But our ambition, in this particular, did not lead us to do more than just enough to satisfy our parents and amuse ourselves. Large and echoing apartments reverberated our duets and trios, while their columned recesses gave back our choruses in redoubled sound. Not unfrequently we passed from music to dancing; then

Chased the slipper by the sound,  
Or turn'd the blindfold hero round and round.

Had all this failed, by repetition, to keep *ennui* out of our circle, we had still another and different excitement, in the dissensions which occasionally occurred betwixt our governess and tutor, in the school-room, on the most important of all subjects,—religion.

I do not mean to insinuate that their discussions on this point extended their influence to the general household, although they frequently disturbed the drawing-room.

Mr. Rivers was a learned and conscientious Protestant, between thirty and forty, much valued in our family for his gentlemanly, consistent, and un-proselyting deportment.

He knew well that the priest, who resided in the family, was the teacher of its religion ; and therefore never meddled with what belonged exclusively to his department. But while he was rigidly negative on this point, he was scrupulous in avoiding all conformity to our faith and forms. Nevertheless, his sense of duty to the office he held, as tutor to the heir of a Catholic family, induced him to abstain from adopting any course of reading with him, on any subject how remotely so ever connected with religion, until he had submitted it to my father.

He was equally exact in his choice of books for my sisters and myself ; which, however, were always objected to by Miss White, whatever they might be.

But having once obtained my father's sanction to those of his choice, Mr. Rivers strictly defended their adoption.

Miss White, who, as a rigid Catholic, was very much confined in her acquaintance with literature, considered that a general knowledge, or even a smattering of it, was but a burden to the female mind, or a temptation to pursuits which might lead a woman out of the sphere of her duties. She therefore reprobated the idea of a young lady's poring over *folios* or *quartos*, as she was pleased to call all books larger than a small octavo, which had not been sanctioned by the household priest, whom she considered as the church's exponent of what ought to be our intellectual, as well as our moral and religious training.

In reading general history, therefore, she took no part with

us ; and ecclesiastical history she considered as intolerable, as it caused us to ask questions not only repugnant to her faith, but beyond the sphere of her information.

Mr. Rivers never argued with her on a settled point, yet he patiently listened to her oft-repeated objections to his plans, and when new ones were made, stated them to my father ; while she appealed to my mother, who, on her part, referred them again to my father, whose decision she never attempted to influence.

My father was a man of varied information, who, being naturally humane and benevolent, could not entertain with any degree of heartiness the exclusive and intolerant principles of Romanism. He was therefore perpetually sinning against its spirit, and ever breaking through the trammels which circumscribed his social feelings, although, for the sake of external consistency, as the head of a family, he adhered to the forms of his hereditary faith.

This dubiousness of mind rendered him indifferent, where he would otherwise have been zealous, and caused him to leave his children to the chance training of antagonist teachers, without inquiring into the probable consequences of such a course on their religious belief, or into the fitness or unfitness of his hereditary faith for promoting the interests of an immortal life. His entire freedom, however, from the intolerance of his church was, no doubt, of immense importance to his children, as the liberty which it afforded to them in their first crude efforts of thought, as well as in their expression of it, must have greatly aided the development of those faculties which it is so much the object of education to unfold. My father allowed himself to read argumentative works, and even bitter censures, on the practices of his church, the spirit of which would sometimes show itself in his conversation ; so that whatever reverence might have been enjoined by Miss White, or the priest, for certain forms imposed on us, was undermined, if not destroyed, by my father's wit, in descanting on their absurdity. With a laxity of feeling towards his church such as this, my father no doubt felt it difficult to maintain consistency in the control he was disposed to exercise over his children's education.



But as he became more acquainted with Mr. Rivers, his confidence in his good taste, as well as in his integrity, induced him to place in his hands an unlimited discretion in the choice of our books, with one exception: that exception was the Bible. He was, he remarked, in the habit of reading this sacred book himself; but it was too strictly forbidden by the church for him to venture on the open use of it, by allowing it to his children.

It was impossible for Miss White to acquiesce in an arrangement which placed so much power in Mr. Rivers' hands without an attempt to neutralize it, which she endeavoured to do, by proposing that the priest should have a veto in the selection of our books. Her effort was vain; and we were thenceforth amply supplied with books of Mr. Rivers' choice.

My second sister, Caroline, was Miss White's favourite pupil, her cast of character and her peculiar tastes alike rendering her an easy prey to the superstitions of our church and the bigotry of our governess. Caroline was continually being held up to Dora, the elder of our trio, and myself as our model in all things, but especially in the negations of her mind, and acquirements; while she herself, naturally kind and diffident, shrank from the priority thus forced on her, and only caressed us the more when Miss White censured us by comparisons with herself. So that although our intercourses of thought with her were somewhat restricted by her limited range of mind and pursuits, our sisterly affection was never impaired by it.

My brother, named after my father, William, was a very eccentric character, who, with a less efficient tutor than Mr. Rivers, must have passed through the period of youth without even ordinary acquirements. As it was, those he had made were much below par, and his tastes unsuitable to his position. Although every allowable gratification was afforded him in the domestic circle, his inclination led him to the society of the stable rather than to that of the drawing-room. My father's anxieties respecting him were endless; and he wearied himself in vain to discover in him any bias of mind that might be trained to his advantage.

My father's brother, the bishop, who lived about twenty miles from us, was a frequent visitor at our house. He was a

tall man, of a dignified deportment, ordinarily reserved and meditative; but a vigilant observer of all that was passing around him.

He was fond of the style and gaiety of my father's house, and on particular occasions, when distinguished guests were there, he regaled us with a full display of the pomp of the diocesan. At such times, I always felt afraid of him; but when he chose to come to us in a private capacity, with a single servant, and without the parade which he thought necessary at other times, he demeaned himself with so much kindness and familiarity, that we forgot the bishop in the affectionate uncle.

It was not often that he seemed enough at ease to make himself agreeable; for his spirit was restless, and although the distinction which the mitre had conferred on him was immeasurably gratifying, he was galled, like all his spiritual brethren of his rank, at not being invested, by society at large, with the titular honours of his position.

The disturbed state of the Catholic mind throughout the country, at that period, no doubt contributed to increase my uncle's irritation under his own peculiar privations, and to render him a stern claimant for the removal of those disabilities which limited his ambition and restricted the exercise of his zeal. The discussions that sometimes arose at my father's table on this subject were not always conducted with moderation, especially if carried on with a Protestant disputant.

Mr. Rivers was an acute reasoner, but he never allowed himself to be drawn out in opposition to my uncle, if it was at all avoidable; as there existed between them a coldness, amounting almost to antipathy.

On the part of my uncle, this might have been caused by Mr. Rivers' omission, when addressing him, of the titles, which he himself considered due to him. Or, it might have been owing to the exclusive spirit of his own religious creed, as the very name of Protestant was repugnant to him; and he sometimes even descended to vent the bitterness of his dislike to it in denunciations little short of anathemas. My father, who was mischievously fond of an extravagance that was ridiculous, would on such occasions slyly prompt the assailant to the very

verge of danger, and then step in, at the critical moment, to prevent a catastrophe.

Of my father's habitual licence in expressing opinions not in accordance with our church, my uncle never appeared to take any notice; neither did he seem at all cognizant of what I may call a singular omission of duty in our household priest, in not requiring the younger branches of the family occasionally to attend the confessional.

Miss White made it a subject of constant remonstrance with us; but as neither my father nor the priest had ever exhorted us to it, after the event of our first communion, we continued to live without even any precise idea of what were the ordinary requirements of the confessional.

Reflecting on this anomaly at this distance of time, I attribute it to the extreme anxiety of my father to keep our minds as long as possible in a state of purity; and from the same cause we were never put in possession of any of those Romish *Manuals of Devotion*, or *Daily Companions*, which are provided, as it would seem, to initiate the young in a knowledge of every possible sin.

The usual system of domestic tuition amongst Roman Catholics is unfavourable to the development of the intellect, and still more so to the moral powers; everything offered to the mind being presented under false aspects, or in such mutilated or fragmentary portions as to mock and deteriorate the faculties they pretend to improve.

As to our religious training, if the expression be not a misnomer, it prepared us for nothing but an aptitude in performing aves, reciting pater-nosters, or carefully counting the beads of our rosaries.

Beyond what is implied in these requirements, and the incessant commands of the priest to 'pay all homage to the Virgin,' we were taught nothing of God.

Neither Miss White's manners, nor the spirit of her counsels, invited to confidence. Yet I sometimes spoke to her of what I felt to be the emptiness of my religious acquirements, and their insufficiency to satisfy the longings of the soul. Sometimes she laughed at my complaints; at others, when in a captious mood,



she would say she wondered that something much worse had not happened to me, since I never relieved my heart of its transgressions by confession to the priest.

After some time, as this sarcasm had been often repeated, it led to distrust and self-reproach, and I mentioned the subject to my father, who said he would consider of it.

Had that prohibited book, which my father had not nerve enough to bestow on us in defiance of his church, been at this time permitted to me, I should have learnt from its pages the requirements of its Divine author, and rested in hope on its blessed provisions for time and eternity. They who have been in childhood carefully instructed in a knowledge of this book, can form no idea of the vacuum which unacquaintance with its revelations leaves in an otherwise instructed mind. Wherever it is prohibited, there ought also, in common mercy, to be a prohibition of other books; for reading, as it exercises the faculties, leads to a knowledge of ourselves, and the wants of our nature, which is ever panting after some undefined good, that it never attains until it acquaints itself with God, and is at peace with Him.

When my father again spoke to me of *confession*, he expressed surprise at what I could have to confess. 'So good a little girl as you, Helen, ought not to have any cause for confession.'

'But I am unhappy, papa!'

'*Unhappy*, my child! Do not let me hear such words again. You must be jesting!'

'No, papa.'

'Come, then, confess to me. I will undertake to advise you, instead of the good father, who I am sure could not understand your little heart as well as I can.'

'Ah, dear papa! perhaps I am unlike other people. I have fancies and forgetfulnesses which distress me. My pater-nosters do not interest me, and I often unintentionally omit them; and when I am addressing salutations to the Virgin, I want to know why I should do so. This is my confession, papa. And now that I have made it to you, you, perhaps, can tell me what penances I ought to perform, to relieve myself of that sense of wrong which depresses my spirits.'

My father did not reply instantly, but took several turns in the room before he said,—

‘Nelly, my love, a sceptical turn of mind is a fearful evil in the female character, and especially in a young heart. I am afraid I must make you over to the good priest, after all, lest I should add to the wrong I have already committed, in allowing you an enlightenment of mind incompatible with the passive faith required of you by the church. I will speak to the priest, Nelly, and tell him to think of you only as an innocent, but rather wayward child, who, seeing something beyond its reach—the moon, for instance—cries to obtain it.’

Although my father said this in the most playful manner imaginable, I was so much hurt at having opened my heart in vain, since I had not made him sensible of the reality of my distress, that I burst into tears.

He took me in his arms, and caressed me tenderly, until a tap at the door of the room impelled me hastily to repress my tears. My mother entered.

‘My dear Dora,’ said my father, ‘here is a penitent child of yours, who accuses herself of wrong without having erred, and would fain receive chastisement without deserving it. Take her into your own keeping, and instruct her in her duty to herself.’

Although left alone with my mother, being fully aware of her repugnance to speak at all on the subject of religion, I could not find courage to open my heart to her as I had done to my father; and I stood in silence, awaiting her inquiries.

But as if she had known what was passing in my mind, she said—

‘I fear, my love, I should prove but a poor adviser to you. Had you not better consult Father Ossory?’

I thankfully replied,—‘Certainly, mamma, if you wish me;’ and escaped hastily from her presence.

## CHAPTER II.

Where there is strength of understanding, the mind can never long remain in a negative state ; that is, it cannot continue in not comprehending, in not believing, and yet in tolerating, what it disdains.—DE STAEL.

MY father's manner of living was a perfect specimen of that hospitality of past times, which is now scarcely to be met with anywhere, and rendered his house a place of chosen resort to numerous friends and relations, as well as to many incidental visitors, who, in summer months, were attracted to our neighbourhood by the far-famed beauties of its Lakes.

It often happened, during three or four of the summer months, that the number of our guests daily amounted to fifteen or twenty persons.

As school-girls who had daily indispensable duties to perform, my sisters and myself saw but little of these guests, although we sometimes joined them in the drawing-room after dinner. But the few hours then passed amongst strangers of various appearance and opinions, became a source of information and improvement inconceivably gratifying to our whole trio. The faces we scanned, the remarks we heard, and the manners we criticised, constantly furnished us with new ideas, and endless subjects of remark amongst ourselves, in our own room.

For two years after this, the affairs of our family went on as heretofore ; guests and gaiety in summer, and quiet domestic life, with the customary out-door exercises, in the other seasons of the year.

We had reached July, 1815. My brother, the elder of the family, was within eighteen months of his majority, to which we were all looking forward, as to an epoch in our family history.

My sister Dora was eighteen, Caroline seventeen, and myself nearly sixteen.

The whole of Europe, during the greater part of this eventful year, was kept in unceasing agitation by the overturnings of

kingdoms, and shiftings of crowns, consequent on the return of Bonaparte from Elba.

It was not until this period, that my sisters and myself were allowed to read newspapers.

What living, animating creatures, did we find these to be! Their records of contemporary persons and occurrences were of surpassing interest, and we began very soon to feel that we belonged to a real world, and that we had a real part to perform in it. We seemed to have attained at once the power of discerning 'good and evil.' With what eager interest did we run over their long columns of many-coloured thought and fact—from great to little, and from grave to gay. On another page, its several advertisements, disclosing so many wants, and offering so many boons, betrayed the private embarrassments, or the sordid schemes of adventurers on social sympathy or inexperienced credulity. With what insinuating courtesy does one petitioner ask for the reader's purse, and another for his patronage, until the heart of the young novice aches, and deplures his incompetency to comply with such painful and urgent requests. All this, and much more than this, came daily on its broad sheet from the great metropolis to our remote abode, to supply the awakened intellects and satisfy the ardent curiosity of its charmed and enthusiastic readers.

The two years just passed had done much towards suppressing my complaints of the meagre information imparted to me on religious subjects. I had been disciplined by the priest and the governess into complete subjection to the externals of our faith, which I had learned to practise with unremitting effort, although without deriving any satisfaction from the performance.

My father, alarmed at what he had deemed the sceptical tendency of my mind, and which he, influenced by Miss White, had attributed to the 'folios and quartos' in such young hands—with more meaning than his jest implied, exclaimed, with Festus, 'Much learning doth make thee mad!' Our reading had therefore been restricted, and the library became a prohibited resort, for which the confessional formed a substitute, and was pressed on us with a frequency which seemed intended to repair the loss sustained by former omissions.



On my own part, it was only submitted to as a duty not to be evaded. And now, after years of experience and reflection on this essential part of the Romish system, I am convinced that the confessional, as ordinarily used, is the very nursery of sin, and one of the great engines of Satan for the destruction of the soul. That my sisters and myself escaped its depravity and its pollutions, was owing not only to my father's influence with our household priest, but also to the personal character of Father Ossory himself.

He was a man who, at this distance of time and with essentially altered views both of his church and his office, I designate a man of purity and of goodness, so far as these qualities can exist founded on unscriptural views of religious truth.

Of Father Ossory, in the latter part of his life, I shall, hereafter, be able to speak as of one whom the 'truth had made free;' and to whom it was given to know 'the mysteries of the kingdom of God.'

It appears to me that it can only be in ignorance or in oversight that any honest or intelligent mind can teach the demoralizing practices, the absurd deceits, and the criminal intolerance of the Romish church. That it is possible to have been born in that church, and to live in ignorance of its essential nature and doctrines, under the direction of a skilful or harmless priest, my dear mother was one of many thousand instances.

My sister Dora had a keen perception of the absurdity of some of the tenets she was taught, but she discerned only their absurdity. She saw not the intolerance of her church, for it had never been unveiled to her—and she knew nothing of its immoralities, because they had been carefully hidden from her. I may make the same remark of Caroline and myself; with this difference, that, owing to certain gleams of light which broke occasionally on the darkness of my own mind, I became earlier aware of some deplorable deficiency, of which I saw neither the cause nor the extent, in the teaching which I received.

The contempt I sometimes felt for the empty forms of duty imposed on me, produced indifference to the performance of them; for the sin of which I wept and humbled myself, without applying to the priest. But I had it all to go over again in the

confessional, where *penance*—not *repentance*—was the absolving condition of pardon, from him who was the dispenser, in his own name, of that which is solely the gift of God.

How could peace dwell in the mind thus at war with its own perceptions of what was rational, and with its aspirations after what was imaged in the depths of the soul as the only 'high and lofty One,' to whom its homage should be paid?

Time was when I had been permitted to 'sit deep in volumes;' and although that time was short, I had plucked from it immortal fruit, which had opened my eyes to things beyond the ken of sense.

When the light of books was withdrawn, I learnt to listen, as I did not read; for though the spirit of inquiry had been silenced, it was impossible that I could wholly suppress the aspirations which still occasionally swelled my heart. My father's lightest thoughts—uttered in dinner talk, or Mr. Rivers' temperate refutation of the bishop's dogmas—alternately kindled and quenched the habitual longing of my soul for the knowledge which had been placed out of my reach by the prohibition of books.

A note, which was brought by a foreign servant, one fine morning in August, and which was instantly handed round our private circle, became in its consequences, of immense importance to my after life. It was from my Aunt Mulgrave, introducing to my father a young French marquis, who had been for some weeks her own guest. The note was inclosed in one from the marquis, acquainting my father that he intended himself the honour of paying his personal respects to him on the following day. Almost at the same moment, a letter was brought from my aunt, by post, apologizing to my father for intruding on him an additional guest, at a season when she knew his house to be always full.

'But you will, I am sure,' she wrote, 'pardon me, when you see my young friend, who, besides his personal attractions, is at present in deep grief for the loss of his mother, an intimate friend of mine, very lately deceased. Change of scene, and the mild air of Ireland, in your house, cannot, I trust, fail to recruit him, although his depression is at present so great as materially to affect his health.'

‘Were he not a Protestant, as well as myself, how much could I write in his praise; and how certain should I be of his finding favour with your whole house. As he is, I do but commend him to your ordinary courtesy: which I know, however, will comprise, as it always does, everything that is benignant and kind.’

My mother was charmed with my aunt’s letter, and expressed great interest in our expected visitor, on account of the amiability indicated by a deep grief for the loss of a mother.

The bishop, when he heard of the expected arrival of a French Protestant, was visibly disturbed; and as my mother continued to speak of him with interest, he turned short round on her, and said,—

‘Do you know, sister, that this young man, with whom you sympathize so strongly, is not only a Protestant, but an apostate; since, as a Frenchman of rank, he must have been born in the holy Catholic church?’

My mother replied, meekly, that she had no particular partiality for a Protestant, as such, and still less for an apostate, although she did not know that she was prohibited from interesting herself in the welfare of an amiable man, though he were a Protestant. ‘At any rate,’ she added, ‘my sister’s introduction must not be slighted.’

‘Lady Mulgrave,’ said my uncle, in a slow and authoritative manner, ‘toleration of heretics, under any circumstances, is a sin of the deepest dye, in one who has been born in the true church, and by the help of the blessed Virgin has remained steadfast to it, whose laws and whose denunciations are alike infallible. I have no natural cruelty about my disposition; but our holy religion conquers nature, and I cannot forbear to rejoice at the destruction of any enemy of God, let me find him where-soever I may; for so our Church denominates all who are not within her pale, whether “Greek or Jew, bond or free.”’

My aunt’s introduction of the young Marquis de Grammont had disposed of us all—except, perhaps, my uncle—to greet him cordially on his arrival. But after having seen him, we were at a loss to express the kind of feeling he inspired. His fine features and figure, although striking, were so much surpassed by



the grace of his expression, and the captivating manner of his salutation, that no ordinary expression of approbation could do justice to the impression which he made on us. 'But he is French,' we exclaimed, and that accounts for both his ease and his grace. Still, there was something more than *French* about him. There were lines of thought and traces of sorrow on his face, and in his almost lustreless eye, penetrating and intelligent as was its expression.

He was about twenty-five years of age, and having been born in the most disastrous year of the French revolution, had been trained, like many others of his countrymen, in the school of vicissitude and adversity, and had derived from its severe discipline that extensive knowledge of human nature and of the world which, while it places a young man in advance of himself, unites experience with youth, and gives him, in the intercourses of life, an influence peculiar and decided.

At the time of the Marquis de Grammont's introduction to my father's house, he was in possession of extensive estates, which had been for the greater part of his early years sequestered from his family.

His father and mother were both dead, and he was without brother or sister. When he was sufficiently acquainted with us to speak of his parents, he drew many tears by his affecting and impassioned delineation of the fine qualities which they had displayed, especially his mother, in the varying fortunes of their lives.

I had always been accustomed, as the younger and pet child of my father, to sit at his right hand at dinner; and as Monsieur de Grammont handed me into the dining-room on the first day of his arrival, my father beckoned us to his side.

I was glad to find the heretic marquis at so great a distance from the bishop; who, sitting by my mother, at the upper end of the table, was eyeing him down the whole length of it with no friendly glance.

My father was an experienced and an animating host, and knew how to draw out every variety of character around him. On this occasion I was happy enough to hear the marquis talk without talking myself.

I was, indeed, in no mood for conversation. The idea that one so lately doomed, in the name of the church, to endless misery in a future world, was sitting by my side, filled me with the most poignant sensations of regret and pity. All perception of the right or wrong of the denunciation was beyond my ken. But as this victim of the church's intolerance, unconscious of the doom that had been pronounced on him, conversed frankly with my father, I could not but discern in their opinions and feelings something of kindred sense and goodness. I longed to learn what the marquis himself could say in defence of that atrocious heresy by which the attribute of immortality, bestowed on man by the Divine Creator for the highest and most beneficent purpose, became to him an eternal woe.

But this was not a subject that could be introduced in such a place, even had I felt courage enough to volunteer a thought of any kind to a gentleman so much a stranger to me.

As the ladies rose from the table, Monsieur de Grammont rose with them, and having conducted me to the drawing-room, left me there.

Miss White was amongst the ladies, and very soon at my side, expressing a hope that the handsome Frenchman had not been initiating me in Protestantism; to which, she said, she feared I was naturally addicted.

While she was speaking, Monsieur de Grammont returned, and immediately joined my two sisters, who were sitting together in a distant part of the room.

They were both handsome at all times, but on this day I thought they were unusually so. Dora was a brunette, and Caroline a blonde. I observed, from Dora's subdued vivacity as the marquis approached her, that she recollected his recent bereavement. As this thought expressed itself on her countenance, it evidently caused a sort of hesitation at the commencement of their discourse, which, however, soon passed away.

When the gentlemen came up from the dining-room, they began, *en masse*, to rally Monsieur de Grammont on his running from the table with the ladies. His replies showed him to be no novice in convivial banter; and although he was evidently not in tune for the raciness of Irish wit, he failed not to acquit himself in spirited repartee.

## CHAPTER III.

DURING the ensuing fortnight we all became attached to Monsieur de Grammont in no ordinary degree. He was a character who bore close acquaintance well. Frank, manly, and sincere, from principle as well as from disposition, the more we saw of him the more we liked him.

He would have been a dangerous person amongst so many inexperienced female hearts, had not the feeling which, as a heretic, he inspired, caused a perpetual effort to avoid too close an intimacy with him.

This prejudice created an effectual barrier to that reciprocation of sentiment and confidence which wins and rivets the affections.

The bishop had stayed with us but two days after Monsieur de Grammont's arrival, and therefore had seen but little of him; yet he left behind him a sting in almost every breast, infused by his mystic warnings, which could not but work him harm.

Even my father and mother were infected with his demoniac zeal for their church, and a consequent hostility of feeling for one so decidedly adverse to it as our guest.

After Monsieur de Grammont's first week with us, he devoted himself entirely to inform and entertain *me*. No doubt, as the younger of the family, and too young to be dangerous, I had often before this been an object of attention to other gentlemen of our circle.

Monsieur de Grammont's seeming preference did not, therefore, move me. Unacquainted with my own heart, and with human nature, I saw no danger in an intercourse which became every day more and more delightful.

Léonce, for by that name the marquis had taught me to call him, found endless subjects of conversation; on which he imparted so much information, that I had a deep delight in listening to him.

As I became more familiar with him, I one day introduced the almost interdicted subject between us, of our faiths, with a view

to rescue him, if possible, from the dreadful consequences of being left without the pale of the Romish church. No sooner was this subject broached, and I had heard Léonce's reply to my earnest exhortations, than I saw the extreme arrogance and presumption of my attempt, blind and ignorant as I was, to lead him into truth.

I was at once convinced that I must discipline my understanding, and greatly enlarge the sphere of my information, before I again attempted to speak to him on a subject of which *he* knew so much and *I* so little.

Léonce, as he spoke on this most important subject, opened a new world of thought and opinion to me, in language so lucid and so simple that I received impressions of divine truth which became ineffaceable.

He did not offer me his Bible, but, in the confidential discourses we held, I had inquired respecting that book.

I told him of my father's prohibition of it, in conformity with the requirements of the church and the priest; and he recommended me to get the prohibition, if possible, withdrawn.

Though hopeless of success, I followed his advice, and to my great surprise and joy, obtained the loan of a Bible from my father.

I had many times before seen the exterior of this blessed book, for Mary, my own maid, who had been sent to me from England by my aunt Mulgrave, was a Protestant, and in the habit of keeping it on her bedroom table. But she would have been promptly dismissed had she presumed to lend it to any of us; and, knowing this, I never placed her in peril by requesting it.

Having now, however, obtained it, I applied myself to the perusal of its sacred pages; and although it was allowed me but for a limited time, so that I became only partially acquainted with it, the perusal formed an epoch in my life.

After I had made Léonce acquainted with the conflicting state of my religious feelings, he devoted himself incessantly to me; and his tenderness, though not expressed in words, sank deep into my soul, and became an absorbing happiness; so that the habitual tributes of family affection which had hitherto been



reciprocated amongst us, were insipid and heartless in comparison with his devotion to me.

Yet his devotedness, though intensely gratifying, instead of elating, humbled me; and the coveted light, which I was continually receiving from his superior understanding, served but to show me my own inferiority and demerits. But I could have been well content to sit ever at his feet, and owe to him alone all I wished to know and to become.

As October commenced, our large party began daily to diminish, so that we were no longer in a crowd. I then became conscious of absorbing too much of the society of Léonce. My sisters quizzed me, and my father, I thought, looked grave and anxious, whenever his glance fell on us together. There were also others who seemed to think they had a right to know the subjects of Léonce's earnest discourse with me.

The apprehension of wrong, on my part, threw me into painful abstractions; and, absorbed in my feelings, I secluded myself from the social circle. Shut up in my own room, timidity and self-distrust took possession of me. I became imaginative and prescient to a painful degree, fearing that even Léonce's regard might already be diminished by the preference I had shown for his society. This thought was so depressing and humiliating, that, when again in his presence, I was no longer able to converse with him frankly. I fancied that, having already occupied him too much, I ought to limit our intercourse, lest I should wear out his friendship.

I did not foresee the penance I was inflicting on myself by this mode of repairing the wrong; still less did I imagine it would affect Léonce, and draw painful observation on the change it caused in his appearance and deportment. He who had appeared to have been almost restored to health and happiness, was now plunged deeper than ever into silence and melancholy. I was perhaps more affected by this change than any one. New apprehensions assailed me. I attempted, but was utterly unable, to converse with him as heretofore. I longed to invoke his aid in unravelling the web which my own fancies and fears had woven, and which I had neither tact nor power to accomplish without his assistance. I wept, when alone, at the coldness that

had sprung up between us, without any apparent cause but my own fastidiousness,—for so I now called what at first had seemed but the dues of delicacy, and respect for his good opinion.

Oh, if I might but once again make my peace with him!—but once again believe that his friendship would be as eternal as my own! It was thus I vented my anxiety and cherished feelings, fertile in bliss and woe!

While wandering about, as I often did, alone, wrapt in waking dreams, or lost in the regions of fancy, my uncle one morning arrived unexpectedly, and encountered me early in the park. His presence filled me with apprehension. I feared his scrutiny, and anticipated his displeasure, and soon escaped from him, without learning, until some months after, that, under his control, events were then passing around me that fixed my fate, without giving me an option in it.

A poetical work appeared about this time, which, though since forgotten, was considered in its day an elegant and captivating production.

With this poem,—Mrs. Tighe's *Psyche*—lent me by a lady of our party, I shut myself up on leaving my uncle in the park, in my own room, to peruse it without interruption. I had supposed, from its title, that it was a sort of metaphysical analysis of the soul. How greatly was I surprised at finding it a tale of love! With what eagerness I scanned every feature of a passion which I supposed to be utterly unknown to me. Whoever has perused this gem of poetry will feel that its beautiful and affecting allegory must have riveted the attention of a girl of sixteen, reading it for the first time. I became so absorbed in it as to be utterly unconscious of the lapse of time. Many hours had passed since breakfast. Even the lunch-hour had gone by, and I knew it not, although it was already time to dress for dinner, when Mary, my own maid, knocking at my door, reminded me that the first bell had rung.

I threw aside my book, and observing Mary's countenance, saw in it something unusual, and inquired what ailed her.

She answered by tears, which she appeared unable to restrain, and, in broken words, told me the Marquis de Grammont had gone away to London.

‘Gone to London! When? Why?’

‘Oh, Miss Helen, we do not know why he has gone. But I myself saw him go, about an hour since. I thought you didn’t know of his going, as you were not with the young ladies and the rest of the party, to bid him good bye; and I’m sure he missed you, for he kept looking round every minute, as if he expected you to come; and he turned so pale when he saw you didn’t come, that I could hardly help crying before his face. But as soon as he was gone, I went into the kitchen, and had a good cry; for he was always so condescending and so mindful of everybody that did him the least service, and he——’

She had proceeded thus far, when she saw me stagger and sink into a chair. I was almost unable to keep life in me. My breath grew shorter and shorter, when Mary thoughtfully opened a window, and drew my chair to it. The refreshment which the air afforded enabled me to recover my recollection and my prudence. I told her I had been reading so closely that I had forgotten the luncheon-hour, and was quite exhausted.

I then dismissed her for a glass of water, and thus gained a few moments to myself, during which I prostrated myself on the floor in an agony of feeling. The sublime and impassioned thoughts so richly scattered in the pages of *Psyche*, filled my heart, and swelled it almost to suffocation, while its beautiful personifications stood around me like ministering spirits. Their voices reached my ear, and realizing the beautiful allegory of *Love and the Soul*, as a verity whose fruition was only to be attained in heaven, I devoutly prayed to die.

Could I, at that moment, have foreseen the long years of sorrow betwixt me and death, I could hardly have desired it more intensely.

Mary returned, and in obedience to my injunction, without informing any one of my indisposition. With more judgment than her mistress, she had thought a glass of water no remedy for exhaustion, and had brought with her substantial refreshment.

It was in vain that I tried to swallow even a single morsel. My throat was closed.

It was necessary I should make my appearance at table, and



without being at all aware of any change in my looks, I was soon, by Mary's efforts, dressed and ready to descend.

I entered the dining-room with as firm a step as I could command. The party was already seated, and every one turned to look at me as I took my chair. The bishop in particular fixed his eyes on me.

I was just able to move to my mother and him, and looking up and down the table to ascertain an absence that I had not yet realized, I met my father's eye, who, instantly laying down his knife and fork, uttered an exclamation of alarm. A dimness came over my sight, and a swelling at my heart stopped my breath. I resigned myself cordially to what I supposed to be death, and in a moment both sight and consciousness were gone.

When I came to life again, I was on my bed, in my own chamber; and there were so many loving faces hanging over me, which at first I knew not, that I thought I was already in heaven.

My dear mother was chafing my hands, my sisters applying smelling bottles, and each one performing some kind office. An exclamation of 'thank God!' drew my attention to my dear father at the foot of the bed.

I soon prevailed on them to return to the dining-room, and leave me to the tender care of Mary.

Revived by so much kindness, I should have been quite tranquil, but vivid recollections came rushing on me, reminding me how ill I had sustained the shock inflicted, and how much I had yet to do to repress my feelings and keep my own secret.

That no one knew the bitterness of what I felt was all the consolation that remained to me. Yet I longed for some pitying friend, on whose shoulder I might lay my head, and penitently reveal the folly of having trusted in Léonce's sincerity.

After some time, I became composed enough to suppose it possible that I had myself been the cause of Léonce's abrupt departure. Why had I been so often absent from the family circle? Had he not more reason to complain of me than I of him? This thought was agony, for it created a responsibility which I was not able to endure. Yet was he not privileged at any moment to ask for an explanation of an apparent caprice?

I had then treated him capriciously ! This possibility was the climax of suffering !

But the sun rises and sets, and the moon, with her soothing light, holds her never-varying course in the heavens, whatever tempests shake the terrestrial world, or whatever sorrows drain the heart of its life.

Weeks passed, and no one spoke to me of Léonce. Why was he thus cast utterly out of sight ? What had he done to offend the whole house ? I dared not ask, lest I should be detected in thinking of him.

At a future time, I learnt that it was by my father's express commands that Léonce's name was never uttered in my hearing, or myself subjected to any remark in reference to what had passed on the day of his departure.

He was not unaware, it seemed, of what was passing in my mind, but he had his own views in adopting the course I have mentioned, as it was both my uncle's and his policy that I should forget Léonce altogether.

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#### CHAPTER IV.

TIME, the great healer of sorrow, passed on, and I became anxious once more to perform in the confessional what I had not yet ceased to consider a duty. I felt the necessity of disencumbering my conscience of a load of wrong, which it had accumulated in reference to a knowledge of many religious truths, which, unacknowledged, seemed to be held unworthily, and as it were surreptitiously.

Many weeks had passed since I last saw Father Ossory in the confessional, and as I waited on him in the oratory, he rose to greet me, with a kindness of manner that seemed to say, 'It is my lost child returned !' I knelt to kiss his hand, but he raised me instantly, with reproofs for a homage which he disclaimed.

I had thus bent before him under the weight of various feelings which would not allow me to meet his eye. Alas ! when I had met him last for the purpose of confession, I had never seen

Léonce, nor did I then know myself as I now did. I had been raised to the heights of happiness, and plunged into the depths of grief, in that interval. I now needed advice and sympathy; yet how tell the good Father of my childish and unavailing griefs? Could I look on that discerning though benignant countenance, and not quail before it. Could he fail to despise the childishness and yet arrogance of my assumption, in claiming him as an auditor of what, to him, must seem puerile?

I remained like a statue before him, with my head bent, until tears coursed each other down my face.

‘My dear daughter,’ he at length said, ‘have you something to say to me which you find it difficult and painful to express? And why is it so? Am I not entitled, from the office I hold, to your confidence? And have I not also a right to share your perplexities, and to support you under your difficulties? Let us sit down and converse freely together, and may the blessing of God be upon us!

As I felt myself further than ever from confession at that moment, and thought only of deferring it, I sat down, and in reply to him, said,—

‘I have indeed much to confess to you, and to inquire of you, father. But I fear it is not in my power at this time to unburden my heart, though it is greatly oppressed. But there is one thing which lies heavily on it. Since I last communed with you, I have become acquainted with the Protestant Bible, and am very anxious to learn not only your opinion of my having done so, but also of the sacred book itself.’

‘Why, the Bible, my child, whether Protestant or Catholic, is the book of God, and there is no such essential difference between the two as is generally supposed. But the Bible is not a book for the ignorant or the young, except under pastoral guidance.’

‘You would not then, father, approve of my having a Bible in my own keeping?’

‘Not to be entirely at your own disposal, daughter. You might be allowed to read portions of it, as indeed you must already have done, if I recollect rightly.’

‘I have read very short passages from it. But they were so

mixed up with other writings which did not form any part of the inspired book, that until lately I had no more reverence for the one than the other. Was it right I should have felt thus? and am I wrong now in making a distinction that exalts the one and, by comparison, disparages the other?

‘My dear daughter, the inquiries you make will lead you into deep waters. Are you able to sound them? What if they prove unfathomable? I will endeavour to solve your difficulties, although, in my weak and individual capacity, I assume no infallibility. Our church, indeed, is infallible, but it pledges not itself for the infallibility of its respective ministers; and, in truth, there is strictly “none good but one, that is God.” How has your mind been so perturbed? Of what are you apprehensive? You seem to think that your religious training has been defective. If, indeed, it has been so, it is myself alone that must be answerable for it.’

‘May I tell you, father, what words are sounding in my ears at this moment? They are a recollection of what I read in the sacred book.’

‘Speak, my child.’

“There is *one* Mediator betwixt God and man—the man Christ Jesus.” Is there more than one? The expression I have quoted, and many others like it, in the Protestant Bible, seem to exclude the idea of any mediator but the blessed Jesus himself.’

Father Ossory here rose in haste, saying, as he did so,—‘Do you know, daughter, that to question the truth of any doctrine incorporated in the creeds of the Church is damning heresy? And such, as in stricter times, would have sent the recusant to the stake? If my words sound harshly to you, yet reject them not; but receive them as the warning of that love which every true pastor in our holy church feels in an especial degree for the lambs of his flock. Yesterday, you were but as a babe, and already, you have attained to a startling maturity; and having cast away that deference for what has hitherto been sacred in your eyes, you have replaced it by a reckless curiosity, that may eventually lead you beyond the saving pale of the church in whose bosom you have been reared. You ask me if there is more than one mediator. Do you not know that the church



recognises many? You look surprised, dear child! Is it then "lack of knowledge" that has set thee adrift on the ocean of opinion? I must, henceforth, take thee under my own especial guidance. But I cannot consent to any further perusal of a Protestant Bible,—not even to a single page of it. And I hope shortly to learn, in a full and voluntary confession, the means by which my child has been put in possession of a book, which has been used to seduce her from both duty and faith. And now, farewell for a short season. I expect you to send me, without delay, that bone of contention between us, the Protestant Bible. Till I receive it, my anxiety will be great and unceasing.'

I told the good father that I was no longer in possession of it. Our interview ended thus, and I returned from it to my own chamber. I found there my mother and sisters.

My mother expressed her satisfaction at the interview I had just had with my confessor. But I could not reciprocate her feeling, and she looked askingly in my face for the cause, but did not inquire.

My conversation with Father Ossory had shocked and startled me; on many points I could not but perceive that my inquiries had been evaded, and that I had left him without acquiring the information I needed.

In his zeal for the infallibility of his church, he had exhibited a severity foreign to his ordinary habits of speaking on that subject, and had enumerated the claims and titles of the Virgin, which appeared to me as unauthorized as they were absurd.

Much as I wished to open my heart to my mother on this subject, it would have been impossible to complain to her of the good father; although his advice, so ill adapted to allay the anxiety and satisfy the yearnings of my heart after something more than was to be found in the rosary or the aves, or even in appeals to the saints, had left me more unhappy than before the interview.

My mother expressed the most tender concern for a sadness she did not inquire into, and proposed a ride before dinner, with my father and brother.

I was but too happy to adopt her suggestion, and escape thus from myself; and was soon in a canter on my favourite steed.



'Vivian Grey' tells us, that a ride on horseback is a cure for every evil, and the best preparation for all enterprises, whether for the conquest of the world or the conquest of oneself. I was thankful for the relief which a view of earth and sky once more afforded me, in the varied forms of beauty and grace always to be found in inanimate nature. My dear father's conversation, too, during our ride, was so well adapted to draw my thoughts from my own griefs to the stern realities of suffering, so universal in the pathway of life, that I dismounted from my horse with a feeling of contempt for the sensibility which had absorbed me in self.

When the family assembled at dinner, we were without visitors. So unusual a circumstance, in my father's house, threw, at first, a sort of loneliness over the circle. But afterwards, as an unfettered and confidential family intercourse sprang up amongst us, the peculiar charm of home was without alloy.

My father's conversation, on this day, with Mr. Rivers, after the cloth had been removed and the servants withdrawn, struck me as exhibiting a state of mind, on the subject of his faith, resembling my own.

Yet I dared not volunteer a thought on such a subject in the presence of my mother, who, though not intolerant in her opinions, was yet so tenacious of the authority of her church, and so assured of its infallibility, that she shuddered at the idea of resisting it in any form.

My father's wavering opinions and inconsistent practices were but the natural result of his finding it impossible to reconcile with reason and common sense the dogmas with which he felt his mind in a state of perpetual antagonism. Yet, had he been as frank with his confessor as might have been expected, it is possible that two men so thoroughly good and intelligent as Father Ossory and himself, both in spirit and in life, might have succeeded in awakening each other to a knowledge of the truth.

Our school-room studies had long since been ended, but our two teachers still remained, to assist in, and in some degree superintend our pursuits and movements.

Autumn had far advanced, and nature wore her gloomiest and most disordered aspect, when Miss White one day informed us,

very abruptly, that both Mr. Rivers and herself were to leave us on the following day. She burst into tears as she ended her communication, and, touched by her emotion, we wept with her. All that had ever been disagreeable in her, disappeared at once, and we recollected only what was amiable in her character, and the number of years she had been with us.

We inquired why she went away, and so suddenly? but she only replied by saying—‘It would be impossible for me to stay for ever. My duties have been some time over, and my work, so far as I have been able to make it so, is, I hope, complete. My departure has, therefore, been some weeks decided on. You all play and sing very sweetly—Caroline divinely; and I think that even in London, or Paris, no one would discover in your dancing that you had not been taught by a first-rate professor.

‘But I will not enumerate my achievements; it would be more consonant with my feelings to speak of what still remains to be done to make you, Dora and Helen, what I could have wished to see you. You must, however, bear witness for me, that it is not *my* fault if you have been allowed to acquire, by too much reading, a knowledge of many things of which it had been better for you to have been ignorant. A child of our holy church needs not to know more of religion or morals than her priest teaches her. Alas, my dear girls! you have been allowed to read the Bible, and to see it applied by Protestant writers to the condemnation of your own infallible church. What has been the consequence? Certainly only what might have been expected. You have fallen into the snares of heresy, and presume to think for yourselves, and judge for yourselves, as though independent thought and opinion were allowable and praiseworthy. Only yesterday, my dear Helen, I found a book open in your room, whose pages were marked all over with your pencil, indicating a close attention to and approbation of their contents.

‘And what was that book forsooth? No other than ‘Newton, on the Prophecies!’

‘Why, my dear, if, when that book first appeared in England, our church had had the power, which she formerly had, the author, from what I saw of its contents, would have been offered up, a

just sacrifice to God, on the rack, or in the flames of the Holy Inquisition.'

Dora and I shuddered, and looked at each other, for we had both been reading this heretical book; and although we could not credit Miss White's extravagant statement of the punishment which she conceived the author would have been exposed to under certain circumstances, her language was so decided and so strong, as to indicate almost a ferocity of feeling against those who differed from her in religion.

Having recovered from our surprise, for we had never before found her so earnest and severe in her rebukes, we attempted a justification of ourselves; not certainly, expecting to convince Miss White, but because, as it led us into an examination of our own views and conduct, it might not prove wholly unsatisfactory to our own minds. We had no desire to oppose Miss White, especially now, when her vocation was ended; but Dora, with her habitual fearlessness, inquired of her whether, if it had fallen to her lot to judge Bishop Newton and assign his punishment, she could have consented to take his life for his mere exposition of Scripture contrary to the received opinions of the church.

'Most certainly,' she replied.

'On what authority?' said Dora.

'On that of the church, certainly.'

'And does the church, then, sanction human sacrifices?'

'It disposes of its enemies, of course, Dora.'

'By what law?'

'By the *canon law*, which is the law of the church.'

'I hope you are mistaken, Miss White. Your report of the church revolts me. Such a practice as you attribute to it could only be tolerated by savages or demons, and I would fain hope that you have overstated the fact.'

'Dora,' said Miss White, somewhat angrily, 'we will drop this subject. I have no hope of reclaiming you.'

'My dear Miss White,' said Caroline, 'do not say so, just as you are leaving us. There will now be no one to care for Dora's soul as you have done.'

'Carry,' said Dora, 'you forget our good Father Ossory and our parents.'

‘I am afraid I did, for the moment,’ said Caroline; ‘but it is because Miss White is going, that I thought only of her.’

At this moment Mr. Rivers entered the library, and Dora expressed to him her concern and mine at having just learned that it was his intention soon to leave us.

He said, he also felt deep regret at a movement which had been rather suddenly decided on. ‘It is impossible,’ he continued, ‘after so long a residence in a family where one has been made so truly happy, not to feel that parting is a wrench intensely painful; but I hope that the course of reading and instruction with which I have furnished you for some years past, and for the effects of which I consider myself responsible, will in future life produce such fruits, to each of you ladies, as shall cause you sometimes to think of me with approbation. It is impossible to foresee what part either of you may have to perform in life.

‘Human existence is full of vicissitudes, and we are all born to trouble. But good principles, and views of duty consonant with truth, will, under God’s blessing, conduct us through all dangers and difficulties; if not to happiness, at least to peace, and quietness of mind.’

‘And you, only, Mr. Rivers,’ interrupted Miss White, angrily, ‘know how to teach either religion or duty—eh?’

‘That is an inference unworthy of a candid opponent, Miss White; but permit me, once for all, to say, with the emphasis of last words, that there is no mind to which the Scriptures are unknown, that can be in possession of a test by which religious opinions may be effectually tried. This remark for *you*, Miss White. As for these young ladies, they, at present, know but little of the Bible; and even that little was not taught by me. It was bestowed on them by a parental hand, and I have reason to hope and believe that they will not be much longer unacquainted with that blessed and indispensable book; but that having it at hand, they will use their own excellent understandings on what they are taught of religion; and, comparing it with the Word of God, be able to ascertain whether it is or is not consistent with the teaching of Inspiration.’

‘Go on, Mr. Rivers, to the last moment,’ exclaimed Miss



White, sharply; 'your assumptions might be permitted to a member of our infallible Church, but to no other. I am happy to say, for myself, that your teaching has never shaken *my* faith!'

'Nor yours mine, Miss White. So far, we are quits,' concluded Mr. Rivers, with a bow.

At this moment we rose to repair to the drawing-room, to await the announcement of dinner. Mr. Rivers, notwithstanding their skirmish, led Miss White, and we followed.

As we descended the stairs, we were joined by my brother. We found already assembled in the drawing-room, not only my father and mother, and Father Ossory, but the bishop also; and two other gentlemen, who were strangers to us, of venerable appearance.

As our spirits were quite below par, the appearance of something like a party, though a small one, was very welcome to us all.

The two gentlemen proved to be no other than two of the choicest spirits of the age, as we were not long in discovering.

The character of even their ordinary speaking, was riveting to the ear; but when, having plunged into a subject which kindled their own enthusiasm, they threw the reins on the neck of Fancy, every sentence became a spell, until the entranced listener was borne away captive, to do homage to their mysterious powers of thought and language.

My father, who well knew how to draw them out, did not slumber at his post. As the servants withdrew, he renewed his imperceptible promptings, so as to lead them to climax after climax; until my mother's attention, like that of her daughters', became so enchained, that we thought not of moving, or she of giving the signal for it.

A moment's pause occurring, we were beginning to recollect ourselves, when the elder Mr. —, after contemplating my brother for a few minutes with a quizzical air, inquired, in a tone of banter, what he was thinking of?

'I was thinking of you, sir,' replied William.

'Oh! I'm glad of that, as I was thinking of *you*. Do you know that I am a fortune teller?'



‘Are you, sir?’ said William, with a startled air; but recovering, said, ‘I wish you would tell me *my* fortune, sir.’

‘If you wish it, you shall have it, my man,’ said he, fixing on him a look of scrutiny that made him quail. ‘Well, then—“the past, the present, and the future,” as Le Norman says. I pass over the ordinary incantations, and begin with the “past.” You have already lived in the world nearly twenty years, and have done nothing but eat, drink, sleep, run, ride, groom horses, and talk to stable boys.’

William flushed, and looked affronted, muttering ‘I’ve done what others do, sir.’

‘Arrah! my young bnck—don’t forget who ye are speaking to,’ exclaimed Mr. —, in a tone of exquisite jocularitv. ‘I can tell you what you have *not* done, as well as what you *have* done. You have not loved Greek, or Latin, or mathematics, or science, or “letter-press” of any sort. But as you are come, almost, to man’s estate, your work is cut out, and you must now do something. Your profession is determined on—you are going on the road.’

‘The road sir! What, to be a highwayman, sir?’

‘Not exactly *that*. A postillion, perhaps, or a mail-coachman, or a waggoner. Which do you prefer?’

‘Neither, sir.’

‘I can’t *untell* your fortune, my boy. You must take one of the three. A mail-coachman is a four-in-hand gentleman; who, if he doesn’t drive the world before him, drags it after him. Come, come, Willy! as you are a “born gentleman,” keep up the craft. Take up the coachman’s box, for it is your fortune to be an actor in equestrian games; and if you break your neck, like Phaeton, it will be all in your line, and easy enough, in these days, for Science to direct the dovetailing of a bit of bone into the vertebræ, that shall set your head again on your shoulders in a twinkling. I suppose you are acquainted with Phaeton, Willy, being one of your clan?’

‘Yes, sir, I suppose I am; but I forget his *sirname*.’

The loud laugh that followed this reply was barely restrained until my mother and we, who had risen from table, made our escape from the dining-room, with merry faces, though certainly at poor Willy’s expense.

Our mirth died away as the laughter of the dining-room was lost in distance, and we soon found ourselves circling round the fire in the drawing-room; and with that feeling of restlessness which precedes a change such as we were now anticipating, we occupied ourselves with mere nothings; more disposed to ruminate than to read or converse.

Miss White was also meditative and silent for some time. Then, turning to my mother, she inquired if she could explain to her the extraordinary jest played off upon William at table. My mother replied, that my father, perplexed beyond measure with the uncontrollable propensities of William, had asked Mr. —, who was deeply read in human nature, if he could advise him how to manage him, so as to give a new bias to his character; and she supposed it was in consequence of this that Mr. — had bantered William as he did, as a mere experiment on his disposition and capacity.

‘I was not sorry,’ said my mother, ‘to see the boy blush; I hardly thought he would have taken it so much in earnest.’

‘It was only a flash of anger, Lady Mulgrave,’ said Miss White. ‘I much fear you will never do anything with William, so long as he is allowed to hang about the cottage of the fosterer. Mrs. Brian, the daughter from Dublin, is returned a widow, and has two daughters growing up. From what I have seen and known of her, I should think her capable of any kind of mischief to your family, Lady Mulgrave; and as I am leaving you, I am glad to have an opportunity of speaking to your ladyship on this subject. I do not blame Mr. Rivers for William’s intercourse with the Brians, because I believe that Sir William, who is always more kind to others than to himself, could not be prevailed on to prohibit it entirely, on account of his tenderness for the feelings of his foster-mother; and I fear that advantage has been taken of William’s visits to the cottage to introduce the daughters to him, and to inveigle him into some sort of connexion with one of them. William’s supposed “passion for the stable” should be translated “passion for the cottage-girl.”’

My mother, who never had a suspicion of William’s being a visitant at the cottage, became more agitated than I had ever seen her. She rose hurriedly, and taking Miss White’s arm, led

her away to her own room, and did not return until the gentlemen were summoned to coffee.

William was not with them, and it was found on inquiry that he had left the dining-room immediately after the ladies.

Mr. Rivers being informed of what had passed, went instantly in search of his pupil, and returned, in about an hour, with him on his arm. No reproofs were administered to him that night; but the next morning, my father was with him, before he had left his room. Meantime our guests were preparing for departure, and immediately after breakfast, took leave of us.

My uncle then left us, taking Father Ossory and William with him.

No sooner were they gone, than two cars drove up, for the accommodation of Mr. Rivers and Miss White. They shortly after set off, in different directions; the one to the north of the island, the other to England.

A visible weight fell on my father and mother on this occasion, which seemed greater than was natural. They retired to their private room together as soon as the cars had driven off, dined there alone, and were not visible till the following morning.

Meantime, as we could not apply ourselves to anything, my sisters and I roamed about the deserted house, hanging upon each other, and thinking, perhaps from sheer idleness, more of the ghosts and fairies of former times than of ourselves. Our dinner had been ordered in our own boudoir, and thither, when it was announced, we repaired.

As we sat by the fire side, conversing idly, after dinner, it seemed to strike each of us that the very abrupt departure of Mr. Rivers and Miss White must have been caused by some sudden necessity or purpose of their own, perhaps. We all agreed in thinking that my father and mother could not have contrived it; yet they parted with them in perfect friendliness, as if their going was a movement in which they acquiesced.

But the seclusion of our parents immediately after they were gone, without making any arrangement for the new position and loneliness of their children, was so extraordinary and unlike themselves, that we could augur nothing from it. Thrown out

of every habit, and every species of occupation, the very current of our life was, as it were, suspended, and we were more disposed to vent our complaints in tears than in words. We went to the window, watched the setting sun as it dropped below the horizon, and should soon have sunk into paralysing *ennui*, had not our good father, early in the evening, sent us one of the London papers, which had just arrived.

We all blessed the boon, and forming a close circle, one took up rug-work, and another netting, while Dora read aloud, for the benefit of all, the news of the day.

There was an unusual flush of news from foreign parts in the paper. Amongst other things, the arrival of Bonaparte at St. Helena, whose fallen greatness, notwithstanding the almost universal rejoicing it occasioned, we were more disposed to commiserate than to exult in, as some of the numerous privations incident to his new position became apparent to us.

The patriotic Lavalette and his heroic wife, the narrative of whose peril and escape quickened our pulses, had also their meed of sympathy. Thus, with alternate reading and fancy work, we contrived to finish our day, uttering now and then a thought or a good wish for those who were driving fast away from a home which had been so long theirs, and whom, perhaps, we should see no more.

Before we separated for the night, we had resolved on applying to my father for permission to use his library, and to cull for ourselves from its shelves.

Carry did not participate in this application, determined, as she said, not to burden her mind with a knowledge of things for which she had neither use nor relish, and which had been so much condemned by her dear Miss White and Father Ossory.

Dora and I did not attempt to seduce her from her self-complacency, nor did we love her a whit less for her difference of taste.

On the morrow, our dear parents reappeared to our gladdened sight. They were evidently sad, and on our asking my mother privately if anything unusual disturbed them, she said that my father had suffered very much at the necessity and the suddenness of parting with two persons of his household so much



valued as Mr. Rivers and Miss White. Dora ventured to inquire further, what occasioned this necessity and suddenness, but my mother simply replied, 'What you, at present, would not perhaps understand, and which it may never be necessary for you to know.'

We obtained from my father the gratification of every wish. The library had lately been weeded of its rubbish by Mr. Rivers, so that the keys were only withheld from us until my father had removed some few volumes which he did not think adapted to our use.

After this, Dora and I speedily entered on our catering, and soon brought to hand the provision we required.

We passed the winter, which was unusually severe, in varied reading, without regretting, after we had once learnt to regulate ourselves, that we had been thrown upon our own discretion. Caroline, who spent almost all her time with my mother, was wonderfully improved, both in intelligence and sweetness of manners, by her society, keeping up her music by singing and playing daily, for her mother's pleasure and her own.

Our winter's reading, though highly gratifying to my sister and myself, had a somewhat different effect on us individually; perhaps owing to the different tastes exercised in the selection of our authors. For myself, I was more than ever convinced of the errors I had imbibed in my childhood, and of the much I had yet to unlearn before I could attain to any certain knowledge of religious truth; while Dora, more delighted with the arguments she had acquired to aid her wit than impressed with the serious nature of the topics on which she exercised it, evasively, if not sceptically, still asked, 'What is truth?'

With respect to confession, our respect for which was effectually undermined, Dora and I were avowedly at variance. I had in my heart for ever renounced it; but not daring to acknowledge the renunciation, I sought to evade the practice by avoiding the priest; determined that, should I be compelled to account for the omission, I would express my convictions, and acknowledge the new views I had acquired.

My sister asserted her determination to continue the practice, for the present at least, as she knew not how, she said, otherwise



to relieve herself of the remorse of having so often laughed at the church's solemn jugglery in many of the most holy things incorporated in her creeds.

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## CHAPTER V.

I HAD repeatedly, during the winter, been reminded in a brief and gentle remark by Father Ossory, that I was perilously omitting the duties of the 'confessional.' To this I had never attempted any reply.

One morning, as I went into the library at a very early hour, I found the good father seated there, with two Bibles before him, of which he was turning over the leaves.

Such an occupation surprised me, and seeing that I observed what he was doing, he remarked that he was comparing the Protestant and Catholic Bibles with each other, in order to ascertain the amount of their verbal differences; but he closed the books as I approached the table.

My late studies, as they were alien to his views, had created in my own mind a corresponding feeling of alienation from him, for which, as I now beheld him, my heart smote me, and I knelt at the table which stood betwixt us, to ask his blessing.

When he had pronounced it, he buried his face in his hands, and leant on the table.

I rose from my knees, and apologizing to him for having unconsciously intruded on his privacy, was leaving the room, when he said, 'My child, I certainly did not expect to see you here at so early an hour; but as a room open to all, there can be no intrusion in your entering it at any hour, although you should find another here before you. I rather think, as you are in the habit of frequenting it and I am not, the apology for intrusion should come from me instead of you. But let us not spend precious time in settling an unimportant question of etiquette; rather let us avail ourselves of an opportunity which, wisely used, may, with God's blessing, redound to his glory, if it but awaken a soul to the sense of duty neglected and of safety imperilled.'

Seeing that it was now impossible to retire without, at least, a conversation with Father Ossory, I endeavoured to rally my thoughts, and muster courage for it.

But tears were more ready than words, and would not be restrained. Though not in the confessional, the solemn thoughts that filled my soul seemed to make it a duty, even to God, that I should be as sincere and unreserved as though in confession before him.

While I wept and scanned the task before me, Father Ossory again buried his face in his hands, as if not wishing to restrain my tears, but to await in patience their cessation.

‘Will you allow me, good father,’ I said at length, ‘to inquire whether your opinion of the Bible, as a book for my use, is at all changed since I last heard your sentence on it?’ He did not reply, and I continued—‘I find more than ever the want of that book, good father; for although I have read many volumes containing allusions to it, and even quotations from it, yet the supply has been too scanty to satisfy my inquiries; and although I am aware that you consider me as having been seduced from both duty and faith by the perusal of that sacred book, I find myself still yearning for a further knowledge of it.’

‘My child,’ said the father, in somewhat of a stern voice, ‘your words are still wilful. They are a vindication of the wrong for which I have heretofore reproved you, and of that swerving still further from duty which so much alarmed me in our last conference. As a child of the Holy Catholic church, you have no right to ask questions, or to entertain doubts, on points of faith which the church has settled, and of which you require no explanation, but that of your spiritual teachers. I have heretofore cautioned you to beware of yourself, and to suppress that wilful spirit of inquiry which you have shown, and which will inevitably lead you astray.

‘Suffer again that admonition, and permit me to say, that although I willingly listen to any inquiry which you may address to me, I cannot allow you to give strength to your errors by a too confident exposition of unauthorized opinions, except in the confessional.’

‘Oh, reverend father, it would be impossible for me at this

moment to attempt confession, but I am endeavouring to be as sincere in the expression of my thoughts and feelings as though I knelt before you in the actual performance of it.'

The father bent his head, and said, 'Have you been in possession of the Bible, or perused it at all, since I last prohibited it, my child?'

'No, father; I have not even seen a Bible since that interdiction.'

'So far, well. Yet I must believe from your own expression, that the abstinence has not been voluntary. I would fain hope, however, that the departure of our Protestant inmates may be beneficial to you. But if the Protestant Bible is to replace them, the benefit will be rendered nugatory.'

'Father, will you permit me to remark, that our blessed Saviour says, speaking to those around him, "Search the Scriptures." There seems to be no restriction in this precept. To me, indeed, the Bible appears to have been written for the unlearned, so clear, so simple is its style, that, to use its own expressive words, "A wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err therein."'

'You seem to have perused this book, with deep attention, daughter. May I inquire if its intrinsic attraction was unaided by extrinsic influence? Had the Protestant marquis no part in your sudden appreciation of the simplicity of the Bible, as you have described its style to be?'

I was so much moved at this sudden and unexpected introduction of Monsieur de Grammont's name in connexion with a subject so sacred, and yet with which he was so much associated, that for a moment my mind almost lost its balance. But recovering myself, without, as I hoped, betraying emotion, I endeavoured to resume the lofty subject on which we had been discoursing without noticing the attempt of the father to ascertain the state of my feelings towards Monsieur de Grammont. His tone and manner at the moment, in connexion with subsequent occurrences, induced me to suspect he had been commissioned to probe me on this subject. He rose from his seat, took a turn round the room, and returning to it, visibly disconcerted, said emphatically, 'My child, there are no disguises before God, and

there should be none before his minister. Even that sentiment which "many waters cannot quench, or the floods drown," is incapable of concealment from him. Bethink you well, then, of the solemnity of your position at this moment, and trifle not with it.'

'From Him who sees the thoughts afar off, there can, I know, be no concealment. But I had supposed myself only conferring with a spiritual friend, and not a confessor, at this moment.'

He looked sternly at me, but I continued, 'As you have mentioned Monsieur de Grammont's name, father, I will not deny that his superior knowledge of the Bible and of religion was kindly employed to enlighten me on those subjects. Yet he did not use his powers to convert me to his own particular faith, although I was childish enough to attempt to proselyte him to mine. But certainly I did so before I had seen that book on which his faith is built.'

'Ah, my poor child! your awakening was, I fear, rather to the love of the creature than the Creator. You have been making "an idol, which you have found to be clay." This is a folly committed once in their lives, at least, by most human beings. But in your case, your extreme youth is some palliation of it. Be more diligent in the performance of your devotions; try the efficacy of fasts on saints' days; and above all things, forget not your rosary, and you may yet be forgiven.'

'Alas! father, there is, I fear—and yet I shudder to suppose I am right—no efficacy in the rosary.'

The father quickly turned his eyes upon me with a look of horror. 'What do I hear! the ordinances of the church contemned by a child of your age! Forbear, and sin no more! When I last counselled you, I commended you to the good offices of the holy Mother. Have you sought her mediation? Have you read the selections and legends I sent you, to enlighten and confirm you in the faith?'

'Yes, good father, and with an earnest desire to discern and appreciate the instruction therein. But I find the legends absurd,—I fear I shock you, good father, but I have pledged myself to speak truthfully of the new views I entertain, how disparaging soever they may be to myself, or displeasing to you.'



Many of the legends I find too ridiculous for belief, and the offices and powers conferred by the church on the holy Mother, fabulous, and unsupported by Scripture.'

'Daughter, your alienation from our holy church manifests itself in almost every sentence you utter. Return, I beseech you, to the humility and deference essential to your age. Continue your trust in those appointed to direct you, and assume not a responsibility which they are willing to bear for you. You have spoken of the legends you have been taught in the Catholic religion as "too ridiculous for belief, and opposed to all common sense!" I shall, no doubt, be able to clear our church from such imputations; but this is not the time nor the place.

'Before terminating our present conference, I must tell you, that until you again seek my advice in the confessional, I think it necessary to impose on you the penance of abstaining, not only from the reading of the Scriptures, but of all other theological writings except those which are sanctioned by the church.'

Here the good father ceased to speak. He appeared both agitated and weary, and remained for some minutes leaning on the table in silence.

He then rose, and saying 'Farewell, my child!' hastily left the room.

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## CHAPTER VI.

WHEN the family assembled at dinner, I found amongst them both Father Ossory and the bishop. My uncle had, indeed, been often with us of late, and seemed to have affairs of business with my father, with whom I had observed he was frequently closeted. My curiosity was not excited by this; but for the first time, on this day I became sensible of a very altered deportment on the part of my dear father, who was indeed dearer to me than I can express.

He who had been wont at table to take part in every pleasant sally of thought, and to enter with ready interest into every



subject discussed, performed the honours of his table so silently, mechanically, and even negligently, that it was impossible not to perceive he must either be very unwell or greatly depressed.

I became so restless and distressed at what I saw that I could take no pleasure in anything around me. It was easy to see that even my uncle was making an effort to appear cheerful, and to converse as usual with Father Ossory.

My mother, spoke only now and then, in under-tones, to those who sat next her, while my father helped himself to different dishes, sending each plate away, in succession, without tasting its contents.

As my seat at table was always at his right hand, I had an opportunity of observing him more than any other of the party; and being in the habit of exchanging with him, in the intervals of the dinner, those little fondnesses which might be supposed to pass betwixt such a father and a petted child, I was more affected by his forgetfulness of me on this day than can be imagined.

When my mother and her daughters were quitting the table, my father desired us to take William, who had only returned home on that morning, with us.

Of course, upon this hint he accompanied us to the drawing-room, where we assembled only to sit as it were silent and spell-bound.

My mother applied herself to netting, but in so languid and abstracted a manner as to entangle and spoil her work; while my sisters and myself sat apart, exchanging anxious and inquiring looks.

My brother soon left us, when I approached my mother, and throwing my arms around her, coaxed her to tell me what had occurred to disturb my father. She pressed me in her arms, and kissed me, as she said; in a sad, low voice, 'I believe he is troubled about family affairs

I observed that her eyes were full of tears, and did not inquire further. But my imagination was on a wide sea of conjecture in a moment.

The utter ignorance in which we had always been kept of all pecuniary matters prevented them from being thought of at this

instant. What then could have occurred? My brother had been absent all the winter. Could he have offended my father? Or was there any breach betwixt my uncle and him? 'But Father Ossory will mediate,' said I, 'and make all right, perhaps to-morrow, and then, the cloud will have passed away.'

The entrance of the gentlemen, when coffee was announced, suspended my reflections; and when, after it was taken away, my mother and they formed a party at whist, I felt at liberty to chat awhile with Dora. Caroline had absorbed herself in the book she was reading, and I did not, therefore, interrupt her. Advancing to Dora, who seemed to be turning over leaves without reading, I looked over her shoulder, observing, in a whisper, 'You are a very listless reader. What is your book?'

'That which you recommended,' she replied. 'Nothing less, forsooth! than a ponderous ecclesiastical octavo. If you had selected your 'Historical Primer,' or the 'History of Mother Bunch,' it would have better suited me; as I am in no mood for adding to the penance inflicted by the unaccountable depression so visible both in papa and mamma. Only look! even now, with the cards in their hands, they seem scarcely to know one suit from another; but are making revokes and blunders of every sort. What can be the matter?'

I shook my head; when she turned to me with a playful air, and said, 'By the bye, little Nelly, did you recommend this leaden history to me with the pious motive of making me as great a heretic as yourself? I tell you what, little girl, as you are going on, you will get into some dungeon or niche of the Holy Inquisition some day or other, if you do not retrace your steps. I am your elder, remember, and have therefore a right to counsel you, so take what I say, gravely.'

'Why, Dora,' I replied, 'you sometimes seem to be as much alive to what is absurd in the practices of our church as I am; although you will not consent to its being of sufficient importance to be resisted seriously. Perhaps you do not consider that you are in any way responsible for either the right or the wrong of what has been taught you under the auspices of the priesthood? But do not deceive yourself. After a certain age, if we use not the talents of understanding and judgment

bestowed on us by the Creator, we are accountable to him, not only for the omission, but for the errors we fall into in consequence of it.'

'I dare say you are right, Helen,' said my sister, resuming her book. After a few minutes, she again turned to me, with, 'You are a very good little poppet, Nelly, but you should not forget that I am your eldest sister, and that I could talk long before you could walk; and although you rather over-top me in stature, you should remember what is due to age. Come, now, that is quite in your own sage and reverent style; and while my gravity lasts, let me ask you, why you did not, when you could, run away with that dear, handsome Protestant marquis? Such a little Huguenot as you are ought never to marry a Catholic; and I am afraid you will not again have an opportunity of getting a Protestant husband. Hey, Nelly! where in the world do these great drops come from that are running down your cheeks? You really must compose your spirits, if you mean to succeed, and not break your heart with sobs, and spoil your pretty face with salt and corrosive tears. Who knows but they may leave traces that can never be effaced? Depend upon it, they are prettier in poetry—'

"Sweet drops of pure and pearly light!"

as they are, than they can possibly be in practice.'

'Oh, Dora! how can you be so unkind and so ridiculous! Do you think tears are ever shed for effect?'

'To be sure they are, my little greenhorn. Do you suppose we are all as simple and sincere as you are? But I see the shower is over now, and we may speak of husbands without crying; although I am sure *I* have a right to cry, if I chose; for, will you believe it, papa has actually obliged me to refuse our neighbour on the other side of the lake, Sir Lucius MacNeil, with his fine estates and handsome figure?'

'Are you quizzing, Dora?'

'Not a bit, Nelly; it is quite true.'

'When did it happen?'

'Some weeks ago.'

'And you did not tell me of it?'

‘Why, indeed, Nelly, I was too vexed to talk about it? But I think papa should have some consideration for our feelings.’

‘Dear Dora, do you really take the thing to heart. Depend upon it, papa has reasons for his refusal which we know not of.’

‘No, no, Nelly, I do not think he has any cause for it but his exceeding fondness for us all. You know that neither he nor mamma can bear to have us out of their sight; but they should not let pleasant people come amongst us, if we are not to like them, should they? But see, the whist party is broken up, the tray is coming, and we may now retire. Come, let us go to our own room; Caroline is moving, and will go with us. Papa and mamma look very ill; let us inquire if they wish us to stay. Indeed, I feel uneasy at leaving them.’

I crept to my father’s side, and putting my arm in his, asked if he was better.

‘Better! Do not ask me, darling. I cannot talk to you to-night. Go to bed, and sleep soundly, that you may rise in health and strength to-morrow. Good night! Helen, go to your uncle for a moment.’

My uncle received me kindly, but gravely; and after a few words with him and Father Ossory, we parted; and kissing our dear mother, we all left the room.

It was early in May, and the evening was chilly; but when we reached our boudoir, an apartment appropriated solely to our use, we found a snug little fire, which my own maid, Mary, expecting us there, had ordered to be made. Nothing could be more comforting than this little provision of brightness and warmth; and as its light was reflected in the china tiles of the fireplace, the whole arrangement presented so *cozy* and inviting an aspect, that our trio were soon settled round it, with a feeling of satisfaction that portended a long sitting. We remained silent for some time, as if by common consent. There may be cavillers who will doubt the truth of this assertion, in reference to three young girls, in a place where there was no restraint on their loquacity, except, perchance, the seriousness of their own thoughts. Nevertheless, I must assert that it was as I have stated, a fact which will perhaps establish more than the mere possibility of the thing, and prove that the vice of endless talk-



ing is a charge unjustly made, when fastened on the whole female world. It must be admitted that the obscure and shadowy aspect of the room was itself calculated to impose silence on us, if we had been at all disposed to be imaginative, especially as we were in the vicinity of some of the deserted, and therefore haunted, chambers of the house.

But we needed not the recollection of this circumstance to aid the exercise of fancy in deciphering the mystic character of the objects around us. The single lamp which lighted the room was hung, in accommodation to a lofty mantel-piece, so far above what it was designed to illuminate, that as its feeble rays fell on the objects around, they might have been supposed shadows, rather than the shapes of anything either in 'heaven above, or the earth beneath;' and the fitful gleams of firelight, as they flickered on their undefined forms, did but mystify them the more, leaving it wholly to the imagination to decide on the region or class to which they pertained.

Charmed by the scope thus afforded to idle fancies, and happy, at this moment, in the society, as well as the silence, of my darling sisters, I know not how long I might have continued to gaze on the tapestried walls, or to invoke their speechless forms, had not Dora broken the spell, by asking me what I thought of the presentiments so much indulged in by French people, and so often alluded to in their conversation.

'Do not ask *me*, Dora, for an opinion on what I know nothing. I do not wish to believe in presentiments, because I fear that "sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." Perhaps I may be thought too young to have arrived at such a conclusion; but I begin to think that the bright morning of life is already past with me, and that I have now only to collect my strength for endurance, not for enjoyment. It is the too happy, if such there are, that love to shade present good with anticipated evil. But I think none of us, at present, require the chastening of evil portents to sober our spirits.'

As we thus talked on one subject after another, the witching hour approached, and still found us loath to separate. The lamp was nearly spent, and the fire, burnt to a mass of red cinders, no longer emitted a single ray, when a sharp stroke, as of



some hard substance, fell twice or thrice on the window. We all rose simultaneously, for we knew that the window was of an inaccessible height from the ground, and quite unapproachable on the outside, except by ladder. Thoughts of many things, which we did not then utter, rushed upon us with lightning speed.

A thick lined curtain was drawn closely across the window, and a Holland blind had been let down over the glass beneath, so that it was impossible the light within could have been visible enough to attract the attention of any one without. We drew back the curtain, shook out its folds, and drew up the blind; but nothing outside was to be seen except a murky sky, and a forest of half-clad trees in the distance. We then examined the apartment, thinking it possible that we might have been mistaken, and that the sound might not have proceeded from the window.

With a hand-taper, we carefully inspected a large mirror, which hung from the ceiling to the floor, at the bottom of the room. There was no trace of damage in it, but we shuddered at the sight of our own frightened faces and attitudes, as dimly reflected in it amidst the shadows of the room.

We left the window uncovered, the better to see, as well as to hear, if the attack upon it should be repeated. We were scarcely seated round the fire, when the stroke on the glass, more sharp and loud than before, was again struck two or three times. In a moment we were all before the window, when, to our astonishment, we beheld a large bird, apparently black, facing the window, and flapping his wings violently. But in the twinkling of an eye he flew off with a rapidity that made it impossible to discern the direction he took.

All this had occurred so instantaneously that we gazed mutely on each other for several minutes; but we had, at any rate, discovered the cause of our alarm, and so far it was satisfactory. The object of the unusual visitant was not so easily ascertained—for although our rookery was not far off, no one of its community had ever before made so bold an advance to acquaintanceship.

We now thought it high time to retire, and rang for the ser-

vants, who, on hearing our recital, were blanched with terror. But emotion of any sort is in some degree pleasurable, especially to the untutored mind, which no doubt often grows weary of the narrow bound of thought within which it is confined. Almost anything, therefore, that breaks the monotony of its ideas, is hailed with cordiality.

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## CHAPTER VII.

I WAS fortunate enough, while undressing, to hear Mary's comments on the occurrence of the evening. She was well skilled in the lore of omens, and spoke *solemnly* on all the possible indications of the mysterious visitation. I listened to her with an interest which I should, perhaps, have been ashamed to own on the morrow, if that morrow had risen upon us as all former days had done.

In our times, when rigid research tears open all hidden things—scowling on whatever resists analysis—there is no covert left for anything “of fancy born;” and the dreams of poets and the abstractions of metaphysicians are cast away, like the idols of an exploded superstition, to “the moles and the bats.” But I had been rocked in the cradle of legends, and reared in the land of traditionary marvels,—no wonder, therefore, if some of its dreamy creations had established themselves in my brain.

I had just composed myself to sleep, when the door of my chamber was softly opened, and my sister Caroline, with a taper in her hand, came on tiptoe to my bedside, and bending over me, said, in a hurried whisper—

‘Helen, I could not sleep without coming to tell you that I think I have discovered the cause of papa’s inquietude. Do you remember, one day last summer, when Dora and I were walking in the wood, near the old Tower, how excessively we were frightened by a woman of a tall and imposing figure, who came suddenly upon us, with menacing looks, and mysterious words about papa and his estates, and her wrongs?’

‘Yes, yes, I remember well.’

‘And how, in our alarm, we gave her money to get rid of her?’

‘Yes, yes, go on.’

‘And how annoyed and angry papa was when we told him of it? He said he knew the “demon” well (that was his word), and would have her expelled from the neighbourhood, and we have never seen her since?’

‘Yes, yes, I know.’

‘Well, I saw her again the other day? She was prowling about the lodge gates, muffled up, as if for disguise, when papa and I came through in the chariot, from our visit at Moor Hall. At the first glance, I did not recognise her, although I remarked to papa what very fierce eyes she had. He looked out of the window very angrily at her, while the gates were being opened.’

‘Well, Caroline,’ said I, ‘is that all?’ somewhat disappointed at her recital, and wondering at her hurried manner.

‘All, Helen! Why you seem to think nothing of the re-appearance of that dreadful woman, although I feel sure it is she, who, in some way or other, is the cause of poor papa’s annoyance.’

‘Nonsense, Caroline! How can you be so fanciful? You call *me* fanciful, but this fancy is absurd. What! to suppose that a wild woman like this can have power to affect our dear father’s spirits or interests, is not to be thought of for a moment.’ While I was speaking, Caroline set down her taper, and moved slowly off to the window at the foot of the room, and drawing aside the curtain, looked for a second or two into the park.

‘Caroline,’ said I, ‘you will take cold at the window, in that slight dressing gown. Do return to your room, and go to bed; it is already past one o’clock.’ She made no answer, but beckoning me to her, said, almost in a whisper, ‘Put out the light!’

I sprang out of bed, and obeying her directions, was in an instant at her side, and looking into the park in the same direction as herself.

‘There—there!’ said she, ‘before that large fir-tree!’ I looked—and at some hundred paces from the castle, standing on

the open lawn, in front of the tree, I beheld a figure perfectly motionless; and was questioning with myself whether it were a human being or not, when a bright moon emerged from behind a heavy cloud, and its beams falling on the figure, clearly revealed the outline of a very tall female, apparently gazing on the castle. We clung together, in breathless curiosity. The figure came forward a pace or two, and extending its long arms to heaven, began to wave them up and down wildly. This dumb show lasted a minute or two, during which she moved slowly backwards, until we had lost sight of her amidst the shadows of the trees. We continued to watch a few minutes longer, gazing on the spot whence she had vanished; but she did not return.

‘How strange and frightful!’ said Caroline, still in a whisper, as if afraid to hear her own voice. ‘What can it mean?’

‘She must be insane,’ I replied. ‘But if she be even the woman you suppose, it is utterly improbable she can have any influence upon our household. Ah, no! Caroline, it is something more serious than that which disturbs papa!’

‘I hope you may be mistaken, dear Helen! But as for this “demon,” as papa calls her, be she witch or be she banshee, we are united enough to defy her spells.’ And throwing her arms around me, she bade me good-night.

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On the following morning my sisters and I breakfasted by ourselves; papa and mamma having ordered their breakfast in their private room. We had scarcely had time to refer at all to the startling occurrences of the last night, when a message by a servant requested me to attend my father, in his study. There was a formality in the manner of this to which I had never been accustomed. Ordinarily, if my father had wished to speak to me alone, he would have come himself to fetch me.

I proceeded at once to my father’s study, where I found him walking up and down the room with an agitated step. Deep thought was on his brow; but he immediately approached me, and taking my hand, led me in silence to a chair. As he shut the door, and seated himself beside me, I became agitated almost to tears, but resolved on controlling myself, for I was but too



sure that my fortitude was about to be tasked to the uttermost, although I had not the slightest perception of what might be the nature of the communication about to be made to me.

My father paused some minutes before he spoke, but at length said, in a low and feeble voice, 'My dear Helen, I have sent for you here to inform you of something which it is necessary for you to know without delay. I am a most wretched man, and scarcely able to speak of my misfortunes!'

I had already fallen on my knees before him, and taken his hand.

'Circumstances,' he continued, 'of a painful but imperative nature, compel me to part with you!' He said no more, but covering his face with his hands, rose, and walked to another part of the room.

'Part with me!' I exclaimed, 'part with me?' The words had struck me like a thunder-bolt, and almost stupified me. I loved my father tenderly and dutiously—what could I have done to alienate him from me? 'Why do you part with me, my dear father?' said I, as I approached him, and again took his hand. 'Have I offended you? Oh! what have I done?'

I could no longer restrain my tears. My father looked like one stunned and insensible.

'It was my intention,' he continued, in slow and broken words, 'to have parted with you without the pain of informing you of the circumstances which have made so agonizing a resolve necessary. But I think, my dear child, you are reasonable enough to be entrusted with my confidence; and I hope you will not disappoint me in the expectation I have formed, either of your judgment or your fortitude.'

He then proceeded to acquaint me, that having for some years been living beyond his income, he had at length become actually in want of funds to discharge pressing debts. His brother, the Bishop, had concerted with him, he said, a plan of retrenchment, which he offered to assist by taking me entirely off his hands, and making such provision for me for the future as should make me independent.

Alas! what a communication for me to receive. It rendered me incapable of reply, and compelled me to be silent upon every

objection which my heart was passionately making against this dreadful separation. My father in debt, and unable to disembarass himself but by my banishment, was after a little reflection the sole idea that occupied me. Hope, however, sprang up in my heart. It was, it seemed, in my power to assist him, and as if every moment of my stay increased his misfortunes, I was seized with a desire of instant flight.

I begged him to dispose of me in any way that could be serviceable to himself, adding only one condition—that when he should have surmounted his difficulties, I might be permitted again to return to that dear home which would ever be to me the brightest spot on earth. ‘We will not talk of that now, my dear child!’ said my father, greatly affected, ‘I had confided in your dutiful and affectionate sentiments in advance, and your present conduct proves that my confidence was not misplaced. And now, my love, we understand each other. You are not required to forget those you leave, my dear Helen, although I fear you must take of them a long farewell, as one part of my system of retrenchment is to quit Mulgrave Castle, and spend some years on the Continent, perhaps in Germany.’

This last information was far more stunning than the first. To be thus separated, by sea and land, from all I most loved on earth,—to be unable to think of Mulgrave Castle but as deserted of everything that had rendered it dear to me—to be obliged to sever it at once from its association with whatever had blessed my existence, and no longer to find there an occasional home, or even an asylum for my thoughts, during the cruel banishment that awaited me—was too much, even for the fortitude which filial love had inspired. I threw myself into my father’s arms, speechless, and gasping for breath. I heard his deep and stifled sobs as I lay on his breast, and I know not how long these moments of bitter feeling might have lasted, had not my father endeavoured to shorten them by disengaging himself from me, and begging me to leave him.

‘Allow me to stay but one moment longer,’ said I; ‘on my knees I entreat that I may accompany you to the Continent. I want nothing—I never *shall* want anything that you have not to bestow. I renounce my uncle’s proffered wealth, and every-

thing else that must banish me from the society of my parents and sisters.'

'You will ruin me, Helen!' exclaimed my father, in a tone of grief and alarm. 'Do you imagine this sacrifice is greater for you than for me! There can be no comparison in our sufferings. But it is a matter of necessity, and must be submitted to. Your uncle's assistance is indispensable to save me from instant disgrace, and it would be an outrage on him to decline the generous proposals he has made to benefit you.'

What could I reply to this? I had now wrung from my father the full extent of his humiliations. I had caused him to suffer more than was necessary. Yet I felt my repugnance and my terrors again coming on me, and to spare for the moment both him and myself, I kissed his hand in token of submission, and hurried from him.

I soon reached my own room, and locking my door, abandoned myself to the agony of my feelings. But in solitude we acquire courage—reason and fortitude assume there their legitimate empire; the influence of the senses, those constant traitors to the mind, is there suspended; and the good and evil of life, stripped in part of their illusions, are reduced in magnitude.

I made my appearance at dinner with far more composure than I had expected. We were without guests; but it was a wretched meal, where every one was absorbed in the same painful subject, and none of us dared to raise our eyes, lest we might encounter looks that must rob us of our self-control.

When the servants had withdrawn, and my father endeavoured to break the oppressive silence by mentioning with tranquillity our approaching separation, all the assumed composure of my mind forsook me, and it was fortunate for us all that my mother, by instantly rising, broke up the party. I saw that her heart was ready to break; tears fell from her eyes, and she moved with such faltering steps that, as I endeavored to support her, her appearance quite subdued me. As she seated herself in an easy chair in the drawing-room, I placed myself on a low stool at her feet.

She was never in the habit of leading a conversation; but at this time, as I looked up in her face, she took my hand, and

said, 'I have learned what a good girl you were this morning, in papa's study, and I feel proud of my daughter's heroism. I wish, my darling, I had a little of your courage myself. I am ashamed to think how much our family misfortunes weigh me down, considering that this kind of calamity is always taking place in life. But to those who suffer for the first time, I suppose it always appears as though none had ever suffered so much before. Dora and Caroline, why are you so far off? Come to this part of the room—more into our circle. Let us keep together while we can.'

My sisters were sitting apart, shedding silent tears at a distance; but at this invitation they sprang instantly towards us, and kneeling before my mother, seemed to await some communication from her. But no one spoke, and I broke the silence by exclaiming—'Yes, we are indeed wretched! And yet you, my dear sisters, have comparatively little or no cause for being so. The state of papa's finances is certainly humiliating and distressing to us all; but it is I who am the victim!' And I covered my face with my hands, in deep anguish.

'Dearest child,' said my mother, 'you must not talk thus. I have but this moment praised your heroism, and has it already forsaken you?'

'Oh, mamma! if I had no more to lose than you and my sisters have, you should not hear me complain. *You* do not lose each other.'

'What do you mean, love?' said my mother.

'Dearest mother, are not you and my sisters, although you leave home, going away together? You go amongst strangers, and must dispense with the comforts of home; but you will still enjoy each other's society, and be introduced to new scenes, under the endearing auspices of him whom we all so much love. While I,—bereaved on all sides,—severed at every point from every thing I have loved, and left alone in the world—what will become of me? Where may I turn to look for the dear lost ones? Oh, mother! said I not truly, that it is I who am the victim?'

After a silence of several minutes; Caroline threw her arm round me, and whispered, 'Try, dearest Helen, to forget awhile



this dreadful parting. Let us talk of something else. Mamma will, I am sure, tell us something more than we already know of that *demon-woman*, as papa calls her, who haunts his steps, and is seen in the park by night as well as by day.'

My mother heard her remark, and said, 'I cannot satisfy your curiosity, my dear, as I know very little of the woman. Perhaps you already know that she was your papa's foster-sister, and that she is suspected of having committed a robbery, from a private closet, of jewels of immense value. She would not for a moment be allowed to remain in this neighbourhood, were it not that her mother, though yet living, is evidently approaching her end; and your kind father does not like to deprive the old woman of her daughter's services at such a time. The subject has always been a disagreeable one to me, and the recollection of your brother's conduct in that quarter, some time since, renders it doubly so.'

My mother, rising as she said this, left the room to seek my father. I accompanied her to his study door, where, hearing Father Ossory's voice, I did not enter, but returned to my sisters, who were still talking of the stolen jewels. I was surprised to find that although I knew nothing of the affair, Dora was fully informed on it.

'We little thought last night,' said she, 'when we were exploring the boudoir for cracked glass, that until very lately an invaluable casket had been enclosed in a cupboard behind the tapestry. But so it was. It seems that the casket contained jewels of large value, some of them in very splendid antique settings. They had been treasured by our ancestors for some generations, and were bequeathed by our paternal grandfather to papa. At the time of his coming into possession of this casket, he had an ample revenue, and therefore thought not of the pecuniary value of it; but after examining its contents, placed it in an iron cupboard which is within a closet behind the tapestry of our boudoir. Papa finding himself lately somewhat embarrassed in his finances, thought of the casket. Indeed, it would seem that he had always considered it as a sort of boundless resource, which rendered it unnecessary for him to think of such economies as are wont to interest other people.'

‘Oh, Dora, Dora! can nothing make you serious?’

‘Yes, my dear,—the empty cupboard,—which, when papa visited it some few months since, he found utterly guiltless of the casket. Nor could he recollect within a year when he had last seen it, or whether he had ever changed its place of deposit. Our two uncles have been consulted about it, but they can afford no aid, either in information or suggestion.’

Dora proceeded to tell me that the stolen jewels were so remarkable in beauty, as well as in size, that there was every probability they would, some time or other, re-appear, and be identified.

‘It is my father’s intention,’ she said, ‘to proceed to the Continent, by way of London, in order that he may there consult the higher functionaries of the police department. Meanwhile, every project and movement of his, by some unaccountable means, has become known to this woman; and he is, in consequence, continually receiving letters from her, full of mysterious maledictions and prognostics, which are couched in language as powerful as it is arrogant. Her talent in letter-writing is indeed, I am told, quite remarkable. It is thought, from her excessive daring, that she must have some legal adviser, or perhaps accomplice; the value of the jewels being great enough to purchase the assistance of any professional man unprincipled enough to engage in such an enterprise.’

Reluctant to separate, my sisters and I remained together until near midnight, unaware of the lateness of the hour, until we rose to go to our chambers.

The maids, when they made their appearance, looked like frightened ghosts; so faltering, so pale, and so wild, that we perused afresh in them the calamitous disclosures of the day.

I was soon in bed, but not before hearing from Mary some of the kitchen legends of the secret passages and haunted chambers of the castle.

Sleep, however, is never far from the young, even under the saddest feelings; because in them the physical nature, fatiguing itself with tears and lamentations, soon sinks under their exhaustion.

## CHAPTER VIII.

I KNOW not how long I had been asleep, when I dreamt that I saw a female figure standing within the curtain, at the right side of my bed. She was habited in a loose white dressing-gown, and her head was muffled up in wrappers. In her left hand she bore a lamp, and in her right, some glittering instrument, which I thought was a dagger or a knife. I had but just fully detected her outline, when she cowered over me; drawing up her arm, at the same instant, into a menacing attitude, as if about to plunge the weapon into me. In a moment, I felt myself to be in a sitting posture, and making a spring at the hand which held the weapon, grasped one of its fingers, with which I grappled so as to ward off the stroke. The struggle lasted but a second, her arm being suddenly struck down by some one at the foot of the bed. I cast a glance towards my deliverer—the lamp fell from the woman's hand—but before it was extinguished, I had discerned the features of Léonce de Grammont.

I instantly awoke, but in such an extremity of terror, that I buried my head in the bed-clothes, lest I might, with my waking sight, behold the terrific being from whom I had just escaped. When I had in some degree recovered from my agitation, I sat up in bed, to assure myself that the frightful vision I had seen was but a dream, and that I was safe in my own room.

The moonlight, as I had so often seen it, was streaming in, through the half-open curtain, at my window. Some loose branches of ivy that crept round the frame were nodding in the night breeze, and their shadows dancing on the floor. While thus recognising, with delight, these dear, and well-known objects, together with the old oak wardrobe—the picture over the mantel-piece—and the crucifix beneath it—and stretching out my hand to feel the thick crimson curtain round my bed, that I might assure the sense of touch as well as that of sight—I was startled by a slight noise in a corner of the room, near my

bed. It was like the click of a lock; but as I knew there was no door there, I thought it could not be that. I then held aside the curtain at the head of my bed, and took a deliberate view of the spot whence the noise had proceeded.

There was no repetition of it, and I lay down, but continued watching the pretty bending and waving of the ivy at the window.

Presently, I heard again, another movement in the same corner of the room. I did not move, however; but chancing to cast my eyes on a large cheval-glass which stood in view, opposite to the disturbed corner, I saw reflected in it the figures on the tapestry, which appeared to me to be moving. A terrible idea glanced across me, that my brain was disordered, and that the frightful dream from which I had so recently escaped, was but a symptom of it. I lifted my heart in supplication to God!—Still, I continued gazing fixedly on the cheval-glass, and felt sure that I was under no delusion, when I saw the tapestry lifted up, and after the lapse of a second, a tall figure, in long white garments, emerge from beneath it. My blood froze in my veins—but I was sufficiently in my senses to know, or rather to feel, that the being I saw reflected in the glass, whether real or spiritual, was actually within a few feet of me, and that I had only to tear aside my curtain to be face to face with it!

While these thoughts paralyzed every limb, the reflection in the glass disappeared, by the retreat of the figure into a deep shadow, through which it glided noiselessly along the side of the room, until it was lost in a recess behind the cheval-glass. But in a moment, it was again in sight—there—crossing the room, and standing in the moonlight! Again it moved, until it came to my toilet-table—before which it stood, for an instant only—but that instant restored to me my wandering senses, for I saw the figure take up a crucifix which lay on the table, and kiss it.

It was then no dream—no illusion of the brain—but some living, real, being was in the room with me. Of that I felt certain. There it was again!—retracing its steps—passing through the moonlight—and back again behind the cheval-glass, and through the deep shadow, towards the corner of the



room where it first appeared. It was then again coming near to me—for the head of my bed, stood against the tapestried side of my room, through which it had entered.

Unable any longer to bear the horror of my feelings, I tore aside the bed-curtain, and cried out, in a loud voice, 'Who's there?' The figure paused, then moved rapidly, but still noiselessly, onwards. It had reached the corner, and raised the tapestry, when I sprang out of bed, and with one bound gained the spot as the tapestry fell at my feet!

My first impulse was to lift the tapestry, and follow that which had disappeared behind it; but the recollection of my dream palsied my limbs. The glittering weapon hung over me!—and the figure that held it, as it appeared to me in my sleep, resembled that which had just passed through my room. 'Yet I was certainly now wide awake? Shall I ring the bell? No; I will run to my father's room. There must be, behind this tapestry, one of those secret passages of which Mary was discoursing last night.'

Quick as thought, I threw on a dressing-gown that lay on a chair, opened my door softly, and, changing the key to the outside, locked it after me. I felt now comparatively safe; and stood still for a moment to listen, before I entered on the long dark corridor through which I had to pass. On each side of it were the doors of unoccupied rooms; and at its extremity a tall Gothic window, from which the moonlight was faintly visible, through its coloured glass. I began to move swiftly over the floor: there was no sound, save of my almost noiseless step, and I longed to escape the horrible loneliness around me; but my breathing became so difficult, that I was obliged to slacken my speed.

Having passed by the doors of my sisters' sleeping-rooms without entering, I had still another gallery to pass through before I could reach my father's room. But it must be done, and I endeavoured to hasten on.

Before I had gone many steps, I heard a sound as of a door falling gently too, in the gallery in which I was. I stood still—'It must be the door of the boudoir.' I knew well the sound of it, as one of its hinges was loose. All the mystery of the

casket and the secret closet rushed upon my memory; I must, however, pass that door to gain my father's room, which was beyond it. 'Yet some one must be at this moment in the boudoir!' I leant my head against the wainscot for support, and tried to restrain my throbbing pulses. Everything was again as silent as the grave; and taking fresh courage, I bounded on, without daring to look towards the boudoir, and reached my father's door. It was not locked; and entering softly, I turned the key on the inside, and sank, nearly fainting, on the floor.

There was a light burning, and my mother and father, whom sad thoughts had kept awake, knew me instantly. They both anxiously demanded what was the matter. My story was soon told, and seemed to them so utterly incredible, that they endeavoured to persuade me the whole affair had been a dream, from first to last. But when I mentioned the sound of the closing door of the boudoir, which could be no fancy, my father seemed struck with a sudden thought, and desired me to pass into my mother's dressing-room, and wait there while he dressed.

My mother joined me there, and provided me with additional clothing, for I was shivering with cold. She also hastily dressed herself; and in a few minutes we were all moving rapidly along the corridors, through which I had just passed.

Arrived at the door of the boudoir, my father fastened it by turning the key on the outside, and we hastened on to my room, where we found everything as I had left it. My father examined every closet and recess, but finding nothing unusual, said to me in an under-tone, half-smiling, 'Where did your ghost disappear?'

I showed him the spot. 'Hold the taper, love, while I lift the tapestry.'

He did so, and instantly asked, 'Can there be a door here?'

My mother and I took the tapestry from his hand, and held it up, while he examined the wainscot behind it, which he found pannelled with oak; but could discern no inequality to indicate a door. He took the light from me, and, passing it up and down in close inspection, perceived a small round mark, resembling a knot in the wood, which, on observing that it protruded,

he instantly pressed. A door flew open, disclosing a dark narrow passage, apparently only wide enough for one person, and the extremity of which we could not discern.

‘My dear Dora,’ said my father to mamma, in a whisper, ‘remain here with Helen: lock yourselves in, while I go and search this mysterious passage, of which, I confess, I have been till this moment utterly ignorant.’

‘My dear father,’ said I, ‘you must not go alone; we will go with you; we cannot be separated from you at such a moment.’

‘Helen is right,’ said my mother.

My father yielded, that no time might be lost. Then, holding the light high above his head, in order to throw a gleam on the distance, went forward, my mother and I following closely, with my night-taper, which I had lighted, from my own room.

We went on without any interruption or sound, save our own footfalls, the passage winding about, and taking apparently the outline of rooms around which it ran. The ceiling here and there was very low, so that we were obliged to stoop as we went. At length we came to a point where a diverging passage became visible, which was approached by a descent of a few steps. Here we halted, uncertain whether to try it, or continue in the one in which we were. After a momentary debate we decided on the former, and, descending the steps, had not proceeded many paces when we were arrested by a small door across the passage, resembling that behind the tapestry in my room. Already initiated in the secret of the spring, my father soon opened it, and we found ourselves in a large room, the dimensions of which were lost in the far-off gloom. My father, after examining it in silence, said the apartment was entirely new to him, as, although he remembered having heard of such a chamber when he was a child, he had never seen it; nor had he known in what part of the castle it was to be found.

He had, indeed, long accustomed himself to think that its existence was a mere legend, more fictitious than real. But, now that he saw it, it recalled to his memory a domestic tragedy of which this chamber was said to be the scene. The room, he believed, had been one of the principal receiving-

rooms of the mansion, which, indeed, the style of its furniture and decorations indicated. But after the deplorable occurrence which he had just mentioned, it had become so fearful to our ancestors who then occupied the castle, that they had it sealed up by invisible doors, so as to close it in, and entirely isolate it from the rest of the building. No wonder, therefore, that in the lapse of two generations, the remembrance of it had become a far-off vision, that seldom recurred either to memory or fancy. 'It is, however,' said he, 'but too evident that while the principals of the house had lost both sight and knowledge of it, it has been resorted to by some mysterious beings for purposes of their own.'

Although we had not been five minutes in this chamber of guilt, which the spirits of the past might be supposed to haunt, we began to feel the air so damp and chilly as to thicken our respiration. We nevertheless made the circuit of the room, my mother and I clinging fast to my father.

We found the furniture of a style which indicated it to be at least a hundred years old, the texture and fashion of the window curtains and chair covers bearing also the same date. These were all dropping to pieces, and their apparently once gay colours all but extinct from dust and damp, while the original crimson and gold hangings on the walls hung in spectral forms, revealing large masses of the wainscot behind.

In short, the whole apartment was a frightful ruin, and connected with the idea of crime, inspired thoughts that made me afraid to turn my head. We were just moving towards the door by which we had entered, and which my father had taken care to leave open, lest the spring might prove intractable on the inside, when a faded crimson cloth, that seemed to cover some article which lay on a pier-table, caught my father's eye, and going up to it, he lifted the cover; but how unutterable were our feelings as we saw there the large and exquisitely-wrought casket, now empty, but which had heretofore contained the vanished jewels! Its presence here was at once a full revelation of the use which had been made of the secret passages, and of this chamber. Nor was it scarcely less complete in its indication of the author of the theft, and of those mysteries and move-



ments often heard by night, which had been disturbing the house and distracting my father's mind for some time past.

We all thought at once of the 'demon-woman,' and leaving the casket where we found it, quitted the apartment precipitately, hearing, as we thought, a movement in the passages. Pulling softly the door behind us as we returned to the passage, we crept silently along, until we had gained the main route, along which we proceeded, still as silently, until we again reached a door that lay across our path. Before my father put his hand upon it, he said, in a low voice, 'As I know not what this may open upon, nor whom we may meet here, I caution you both against surprises. Hold up your taper, Helen, that we may see what is before us.' I obeyed, and he approached the door, which, to our surprise, was ajar. On throwing it open, and proceeding a few steps, we found ourselves in a large closet, the shelves of which were crowded with an immense variety of articles that appeared to have been placed there for safe-keeping.

'Ah!' exclaimed my father, 'now I know where we are! It is even as we have concluded. Had I known of this entrance before, and could have supposed that that demon had at any time access to this house, all that has occurred might have been prevented!'

My dear father was greatly agitated, but we did not linger; and passing through the closet to the door of exit, with which he was familiar, and of which he had the key in his pocket, he found it, like its opposite, by which we had entered, standing slightly ajar. We neither of us spoke, but exchanging glances, my father pushed it open, when we found ourselves in a small room that I seemed to recognise. I looked round it for a moment in astonishment. It was the boudoir!—*our* boudoir—as my sisters and I were wont to call it. On passing further into the room, I perceived that what I had always supposed to be only a large mirror, in an ebony frame, hanging from the ceiling to the floor, was in fact the very door through which we had just entered!

My mother smiled at my looks of wonder, as of course she was already acquainted with this secret, and, as well as my father, thought that the mirror was the only door of entrance to the private closet. My mother seemed quite exhausted; and throwing

herself into a chair, expressed a hope that our search, at least for the night, was ended.

‘Indeed,’ said she, ‘I know not how it is possible for us to get further; for if you recollect, we turned the key of the door of this room on the outside, when we passed through the gallery?’

While she spoke, my eye glanced at the table in the centre of the room; and my attention was arrested by a group of things on it not familiar to me. A closer survey revealed to us a dark lantern, in which was a wax candle. By the side of it lay some shavings, a bundle of matches, and a tinder-box. Here, too, was my own ebony crucifix, which, by the moonlight, I had seen the figure that stalked through my chamber in the early part of the night take from my toilet-table and lift to its lips.

My father saw nothing of all this. He was stooping to examine the floor with a light in his hand. He started—and raised himself quickly up. As he did so, my attention was riveted by observing him cautiously move to the fire-place, and deposit the candle he held on the corner of the grate. He then stood still, silently gazing on the floor with clasped hands; then, covering his face, remained several seconds in silence. As he looked up, he was so ghastly pale that I moved quickly towards him, to inquire if he was ill. My mother, too, who had observed what was passing, came across the room to us. My father threw his arms around us both, and for a moment wept convulsively.

‘My dear father,’ I exclaimed, ‘why are you thus? I am sure you must be ill! Let us get back, without delay, to your chamber.’

‘Hush! speak not,’ said he. ‘Life or death hangs on a sound! Oh, where are my senses?’

I thought him seized with delirium, and felt ready to expire at the idea; when he whispered distinctly and closely into my ear, ‘Helen, I fear the effect upon your mother of what I must nevertheless speak to her, as well as to you. If you have courage in your heart muster it all! Some incendiary has plotted to set fire to the castle; to this room in which we stand; to the passages by which alone we may be able to escape. How am I to tell this to your mother?’

I felt as he paused that my suspicion of his delirium was con-

firmed. But I had not a moment to ask myself what I should do for him or for ourselves, for, pointing to the floor, he again whispered,—‘See! Helen, and do not start at what I tell you: I know you have a firm heart,—the floor within the passages and in this room is covered thick with gunpowder, and unless we can avert it, the whole building will shortly be in flames! Our minutes are numbered! Listen! are there not steps?—perhaps those of the incendiaries in the corridor!’

I stepped quickly to the table to get my taper, that I might examine the floors, and convince myself of what he had asserted. He saw my purpose, and seizing me with a rapid grasp, withheld me; extinguishing at the same moment the taper in my hand.

‘Do you not know that one spark would fire the whole train? See! here are wisps of straw, and there are shavings, regularly laid at intervals! How we have already passed through those passages with naked lights in our hands, and escaped destruction, is indeed a miracle!’

My mother had been clinging closely to him, and had heard enough of what he had said aside to me to comprehend our situation. She expressed no fear, she uttered not a sound, but looked deathly pale, and repeatedly crossed herself.

‘This lantern and these matches,’ said my father, as he surveyed the table, are but accessories to the plot. ‘Softly! softly! the least sound might accelerate our destruction!’ Then again he covered his face with his hands.

I can never forget the feelings of that moment, standing as we did on the brink of a fate so dreadful; my mother and I gazing at each other with clasped hands, and nearly lost to consciousness. Yet it was but for a moment. My father recovered his presence of mind, and assuming a look of tranquillity, spoke so assuringly and so calmly as to recal our fleeting senses.

‘That lantern,’ said he, ‘is invaluable, it will enable us to pass in safety over the destruction beneath our feet!’

It was but the work of an instant to seize it—light the candle within—and close it.

‘Now, my brave darlings! as we cannot escape from this room by the door which opens on the corridor, and which my own

unfortunate hand locked on the outside, we must return back through the secret passages.'

Familiar with the spring of the mirror-door, my father flung it open. We were already in the closet. He turned the light to the secret door (which we had shut after us as we came through) to search for the spring. He could nowhere find it. He passed his hand over every part of its surface. Nothing was there to indicate it.

'Are we shut in by this door also!' said my father, with gestures of the most poignant distress. 'We must return!—and what then?'

My mother, who had been revived by the words of hope which he had previously uttered, now exclaimed, with imploring looks—'Oh try! try once again! Oh Dora! Caroline! what will become of you!'

My father still stood at the door, repeating his fruitless efforts, when we heard a slight sound in the boudoir.

'Hark!' said my father, in a hurried whisper, 'I hear a movement at the door!'

There could be no mistake, the key was cautiously and slowly revolving in the lock.

Quick as thought my father was in the boudoir. We rushed breathlessly after him, and saw him seize the handle of the door. It was forcibly held on the outside. There was a violent struggle.—'Help! help! Helen,' cried my father, in a tremendous voice. I grasped with both hands the partly opened door. One moment, success was with *us*—the next—with our adversaries! and there was gasping for breath on both sides. Life or death was in the struggle! Another superhuman effort on our side, and my father and I fell back, with the door in our hands!

In a moment he was on his feet again, and had rushed out into the corridor. He called to us to follow, and we kept up with him, in full pursuit of retreating footsteps, along the corridors, down the back stairs through the kitchen passages, and out to a door that led into a court-yard; which, before we could reach it, was violently banged to. My father wrenched it open just in time to descry two figures in rapid flight through an opposite doorway in the court-yard. He would have pursued them on the



instant, but the gunpowder track reached to the very sill of the doorway at which we stood, and we knew not but some hidden accomplice might yet be lying in wait, to put the finishing stroke to the plot, by firing the train at its extremity.

There was a large fierce dog in the yard, furiously barking as we made our appearance, and leaping about at the extremity of his chain, as if he wished to take part in the fray. My father stooped down, set him free, and showing him the track of the flying figures, although they were already nearly lost in the darkness, cried, 'Hie on, Rover! After them! Seize them, my brave fellow, and bring them back!' Off went the noble animal swift as the wind, leaping over fence, paling, and every other impediment. We watched him until his outline was no longer visible, although we could still hear his loud deep voice booming on the morning air.

This done, we turned to look at and embrace each other, which we did, with the most fervent love and gratitude to Him who had preserved us through such a night.

My mother, unable to support herself any longer, was nearly fainting, and my father observing it, caught her in his arms as if she had been an infant, and bore her to her own chamber.

Having committed my mother to the care of Dora, my father returned to me, and having done everything to secure the safety of the castle for at least a few hours, I retired once more to my own chamber, to lie down again, where I had so lately lain under the influence of inexpressible terror.

Before I retired to rest, Rover, the dog, had returned unsuccessful from his pursuit of the flying incendiaries, except that he had brought in his mouth the skirt of a man's black coat, which he must have torn off with his teeth, and which he laid down at my father's feet as his trophy.

When I went to my chamber, my father, being uneasy respecting the door behind the tapestry, wished to make it secure for the instant by nailing it; but wanting the means to do so, he placed Rover in the secret passage, and desired him to guard the door; an injunction which the animal seemed well to understand, for he laid himself down instantly at it. With this guard, I had slept undisturbed.

But in the morning, the instant there was a movement in my chamber, the animal began to let me know that he was there, by an occasional low bark and scratching at the door. Mary, meanwhile, who had flown at the sound of my bell, was already with me, congratulating me, with strong emotion, on the escape we had all had from the dreadful fate which had been prepared for us. She wondered much how I could return to sleep in a room which had been the scene of such fearful occurrences; and when the dog scratched again at the door behind the tapestry, she was startled to such an extremity, that to relieve her fears I opened the door, and brought him into the room. The animal was delighted at being released; and wagging his tail, and looking intelligently up in my face, seemed to ask me if he had done his duty.

Of course, I gave him his meed of praise, upon which he frisked about with such extreme vivacity, that my poor Mary was again very uneasy, and I desired her to open the door and let him pass down stairs. But he seemed to know that his mission was not yet fulfilled; for he turned from the open door, and taking the track of the phantom of the night, walked slowly the whole length of it, with his nose to the ground, uttering every now and then a half bark, until he stood still at the tapestry door; then, seeing that I did not attend to his indications, he came up to me, and taking me by the skirts, led me back through the track, in which he had just been, where I found, not without fresh terror, gunpowder strewed the whole way. Both Mary and I were greatly affected, and well disposed to caress the intelligent and wonderful animal, so sagacious and so useful, and so little less than human. But he was too large and too boisterous for a lady's chamber, and now, quite as willing to go as we were to let him pass out of the room, he darted off in an instant.

Mary had a thousand things to tell me when the dog was gone, in whose presence she had seemed under some restraint. She informed me that there was already a guard of soldiers patrolling round the castle and grounds, with a sentinel stationed at every door; that they had come from a neighbouring barracks; that the old woman, my father's foster nurse, had just expired; that

two constables had been sent in search of the daughter and her accomplice, said to be the parish priest; that all the gunpowder had been carefully swept up; a messenger dispatched for the bishop; and, finally, that breakfast was nearly ready.

My two sisters now tapped at my door, and entered, laughing, crying, deploring, rejoicing, alternately, and embracing me over and over again.

We descended to the breakfast-room together, and here a new scene of congratulation and tears awaited me. My mother, father, uncle, confessor, all were there, with hearts so full, that a sumptuous breakfast stood long untasted.

Oh joy! hast thou no tongue in which to speak thine own ecstatic thought, that thou must still from *sorrow* steal her tears?

When breakfast was over, my sisters and I prevailed on my father to take a turn on the lawn. Although he could bestow but a few minutes on us, he answered our numerous questions, and informed us that a meeting of most of the neighbouring magistrates would take place in the castle at two o'clock, to consult on the measures to be taken for getting hold of the incendiaries. He had already, himself, forwarded two scouts to Dublin, where the 'demon,' Margaret Brian, had recently resided, and where it was supposed two grown-up daughters of hers might still be living. 'But,' said my father, 'that woman is so well acquainted with the hide-and-seek-game of this part of Ireland, that I fear there is no hope of coming up with her at present. Meantime, her poor old mother furnished me this morning, shortly before she breathed her last, with information of a very decisive nature, which leaves not a single doubt of her daughter's having been the perpetrator both of the theft of the jewels, and of the plot to burn the castle. But she had an accomplice in the parish priest, and how deplorable soever this fact may be, there seems, from the testimony of the old woman, to be no doubt of it. It is unfortunate that this evidence was given to myself alone, the perturbation of the moment, and the rapid sinking of the dying woman, not allowing time to call in any witness. My leaving home, too, at this time, is most disastrous to all our plans.'

‘Is it impossible to defer your departure indefinitely, my dear father?’ I inquired.

‘Ah, my child, that is a sore question—and from you, too, whom I am to leave behind!’

At this instant, the bishop and Father Ossory appeared on the lawn, and my father immediately joined them.

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## CHAPTER IX.

SEVERED as I was about to be from my dear family, under peculiar circumstances, I could not but entertain inexpressible anxiety for their future safety. Our house, indeed, for the present, escaped the destruction so surely meditated and so nearly executed by a menial who might have been supposed without power to accomplish such a purpose.

Yet, seeing what she had dared to attempt, there could be no security against the repetition of the atrocity in some new form, so long as she was at large. For although her vengeance was professedly aimed only at my father, on account, as it was said, of his having repulsed, with great indignation, claims which when young she had made on his notice beyond those of a mere foster-sister, yet her resentment included in it every member of his family.

As I contemplated these things, I found the strongest reasons for acquiescing in the departure of my family from Ireland, even as a measure of mere self-preservation, in case of my father’s not succeeding in placing his persecutor in the hands of justice. Yet resignation was far from my heart, and I still asked myself, with tears, why I might not accompany them? But this inquiry had already been answered by the terms of the obligation incurred to my uncle.

‘And why should I lament, though at so great a cost to myself, that I am thus made useful to so dear a parent? No!’ I exclaimed, ‘I will have no more regrets. The sacrifice of self is not only a duty but a triumph, when we make it for those we love.’



I became more tranquil, and when the family circle met again, and I learnt that arrangements were already made for my departure with my uncle on the following morning, I received the announcement without losing my self-possession. I shall be forgiven for yielding, on my return to my own room, to a flood of tears, which left me no more to shed; for in leaving the home of my infancy, under circumstances so hopeless as those which caused my banishment, I felt that I should be for ever sundered from it, and be thus rent at once both from the illusions and the realities that had hitherto charmed my existence.

Father Ossory was under the necessity of leaving us on this day before dinner, and as I wished to have an interview with him before my departure, I requested an audience of him in the oratory, early in the day.

When I had requested his permission, in a former interview, to be allowed to use the Protestant Bible, he had peremptorily refused me. A few days after, he acceded to my request, by sending me a copy both of that and of the Catholic Bible; so that I had an opportunity of comparing the two, my sister Dora assisting me in doing so. The discrepancies in the two translations were numerous, and in some instances important, inasmuch as they involved points of doctrine, as well as of practice. We found the Catholic Bible full of copious notes in the margin, the general tenor of which was in striking opposition, not to say contradiction, to the obvious meaning of the sacred text.

All this I mentioned to the good old man on the occasion of our present interview, and when I had done so, he seemed more than usually depressed, and there was a mildness and deep seriousness in his tone and manner, that rendered everything he said impressive. He appeared to me like a person under some mental difficulty. He made assertions, then explained them, and again revised them, as if painfully anxious to be in the right.

Venerable old man! had a gleam of light shone on his mind, exhibiting the possibility of his not having yet attained to a knowledge of divine truth? Or did he regret that he had put into my hands that which had led me still further from the Catholic faith? Our interview terminated by his recommending me to aim at humility, rather than knowledge; and giving

me his blessing, I took leave of him, under a feeling of great depression and self-distrust.

As I quitted the good father, and was slowly crossing the hall, I perceived, through one of the side windows of the entrance door, a carriage and four driving up the great avenue at full speed. So far as the liveries were recognisable in the distance, I fancied them to be those of Sir Lucius Mac Neil, and instantly thought, with pain, of the rejection he had recently received from my sister.

I did not quicken my steps, but rather lingered, with a feeling of curiosity to ascertain who might be our new guest. I thought that, having ascertained this, I could in a moment retire from the hall by one of the many side doors, after the carriage had reached the house. But the footmen, who must have seen its approach, and perhaps identified the liveries in the distance, came running in haste to the great door of entrance, and throwing it open, were in a moment at their post, awaiting its arrival.

As the steps of the carriage were let down, a gentleman sprang from it, and bounded into the hall, before I had time to move.

I recognised him, and my first thought was to run away; but it was too late for this expedient, as he was already approaching me. Monsieur de Grammont—for it was indeed he whom I beheld—greeted me without a word in a sort of dumb show, but with all his accustomed grace of manner; while I, utterly incapable of either word or movement, was so distracted betwixt the joy of seeing him, and the pain of rushing recollections, that I forgot every ordinary courtesy; but recovering myself after a few moments, proposed to conduct him to my father.

He bowed assent, and, turning to the servants, who stood in a distant part of the hall awaiting his orders, dismissed them.

We were now alone. My feelings were irrepressible, and I burst into tears.

The marquis was excessively distressed by my grief, which he seemed not to understand, and entreated me to confide to him its cause, which he probably supposed to be the state of our family affairs. Taking my hand, he pressed it to his lips, and supplicated earnestly for a moment's private interview.

‘Let me not alarm you,’ said he; ‘I will detain you only long enough to ask a single question. I know the sincerity of your nature, and your answer will decide my fate.’

I could not, nor did I attempt to make any reply; and, seeing how incapable I was of doing so, he took silence for consent, and led me across the hall to a small cabinet, the door of which was open. Shutting it on our entrance, he conducted me to a seat. Distracted by conflicting feelings, but thinking I must say something, I expressed an apprehension that, in detaining him so long from my father, I was deferring the welcome which I was sure he would be impatient to express, on his return to the castle.

‘Pardon me,’ said he, in a sad tone, and changing colour as he spoke, ‘I am sorry not to be of your opinion; but if I have *your* welcome, it will supply the lack of every other.’

He did not give me time to inquire of myself what he could mean; but gazing on me for a moment with a look of intense anxiety, said, ‘When I think of the hopes I peril, and the visions of happiness which the question I am about to ask may destroy, I am surprised at my own rashness. Nevertheless, suspense comprises so much misery, that I cannot endure it longer.’

All my reserve was giving way at sight of his suffering countenance, and the frankness of former times was returning, when, without being aware of any object, I said, thoughtlessly, ‘Ah, Monsieur de Grammont, is it the custom in your country, when good friends part for a long time, not to utter a word of farewell, or a wish to meet again? Is that what is called taking *French leave*?’

As I asked this question, the palor of his countenance was in a moment exchanged for a crimson hue, and he exclaimed—‘Is it possible that I hear aright? Do you indeed deign to reproach me for an agonizing omission, despotically forced on me? Was it not, then, *your* rejection which compelled me to it?’

‘Rejection!’ I repeated, in bewilderment, ‘what rejection?’

‘The rejection of my hand, my heart, my all—proffered to you through your father, on the very day I left the castle, when I was last here. I implored both Sir William and Lady Mulgrave

to allow me to receive that rejection from your own lips; but in vain. They were so inflexibly opposed to my wishes, as to request me (with great politeness certainly) to depart without even seeing you again.'

My astonishment and other feelings overpowered me. Léonce knelt at my feet, and again asked—'Was the rejection, then, not *yours*?'

'No—it was not. I never, until this moment, dreamed that I had been honored by any proposal of yours.'

As I said this, all reserve seemed at once to be thrown away, and his expressions of delight became too rapturous to be repeated. I will therefore not attempt to record them, or to describe the sounds which now met my ear. They could vibrate only on hearts awaking, like mine, from a long dream of doubt and desolation. In a few minutes I was fully satisfied that I was loved as far beyond my deserts as my hopes, and more in danger of being idolized than again forsaken. The circumstances under which our mutual confidences were made, left us neither time nor power to deliberate; and before we could think of consequences, we had solemnly exchanged vows which bound us to each other for ever.

It was now necessary that it should be ascertained at once, to whom the power of disposing of me belonged, that Léonce might no longer be kept in suspense, and that we might both know our future doom.

No one could decide this point but my father—that dear father whom I loved so much, but who from some, at present, imperceptible cause, had, perhaps, devoted both Léonce and myself to endless regrets.

I learned from Léonce that he had been made acquainted with the projects of my father for retrenchment, as well as with the unfortunate circumstances which occasioned them, by my Aunt Mulgrave, and that it was his intention, in the interview he was about to have with my father, to place his house in Paris at his disposal, during his stay there. His arrival at the castle had been hastened by his having heard on the road of the danger in which we had been so recently placed by incendiaries. He begged me to tell him the particulars of it, and



was deeply moved by a hasty narration of them. There was much mystery, he thought, in the cause to which we attributed so fearful an attempt, which seemed inadequate to the malignity of it.

‘As I take a survey,’ said he, ‘of the complications which surround your family, and of your own position when severed from them, I feel sick at heart, and tremble to again lose sight of you.’

I felt as he did on this subject, and spoke to him of that mercy which is over all the works of God, and of the protecting care which never slumbers.

A train of religious thoughts were thus introduced, and we reciprocated ideas and feelings, which led me to inform him of my almost avowed secession from Romanism. He listened with deep attention to a detail of the circumstances and influences which had led to this result, and implored me to be ‘faithful unto death’ to the light received.

I found it so difficult to prevail on Léonce to allow me to leave him, that the lunch-hour, struck by the hall clock, had begun to bring the family together, before our ‘moment’s interview’ had terminated. A deep sadness overspread the countenance of Léonce as I received the parting pressure of his hand, and his million of acknowledgments for what he called my condescension, in listening to him and accepting his vows. As I hastily pronounced my adieus, supposing we should meet again in a few minutes at the lunch-table,—

‘Helen,’ said he, ‘a presentiment of evil presses on me; and I much fear, your uncle being here, as on a former occasion, that your father will again allow himself to be controlled by him in deciding your fate. Independently of your uncle’s *Protestant hatred*, which you are aware he has hardly ever thought it worth while to conceal, I am apprehensive that you are in some way already disposed of by him, and he will perhaps not consult your inclinations, or be moved by any resistance to his will. Think me not disposed to groundless suspicion, dearest Helen. Had you lived in the world as long as I have, and seen the depths of as many Popish intrigues as I have, you would participate in my distrust.’

‘Fear nothing,’ said I, thoughtlessly; ‘with faith and patience, we shall conquer all difficulties!’

I was indeed too happy at that moment in Léonce’s tenderness and truth, and so confident of his power to control events, that I could not fear anything so long as he was with me.

I left him, nevertheless, in tears; and having made my escape, flew up stairs to my own apartment, without looking behind me, or encountering a single individual.

My sisters had already gone down, and being alone, I knelt to thank God for the unexpected and inexpressible happiness that had befallen me. As I went to an open window, and gazed on a beautiful scene, mantled with more than mid-day splendours, both earth and sky seemed to participate in my happiness.

I had observed, as I passed through the hall, that Monsieur de Grammont’s carriage was not waiting at the door, and supposed it had been driven away in expectation of his remaining at the castle.

Will he be invited to remain? was a query which instantly threw a dark cloud over me, as I thought on the possibility, which Léonce had suggested, of a second rejection.

‘But no,’ said I; ‘it is impossible that my father could repeat such a mistake. His circumstances and views, too, which are now so different from what they lately were, must enable him to see (independently of the happiness his consent would confer on Léonce and myself) the advantage to us all, of such an addition to our family as that of Monsieur de Grammont.’

‘He casts me from himself and my whole family, only that through my uncle’s bounty or caprice I may be provided for in future life. By accepting Monsieur de Grammont’s proposals, who I have no doubt is generous enough not to ask a dowry with me, I should be able to join the dear travelling party, of which Léonce would make one; and our hearts would not be torn to pieces by the cruel separation now contemplated.’

My experience of life at this time had not taught me that the greater part of the misery that fills the world is owing to the wrong-headedness of those who control its affairs.

As I entered the eating-room, my first glance fell on the bishop and Father Ossory, who were in close conversation,

apart from my mother and sisters. Until this moment the oddity of Monsieur de Grammont's carriage having remained at the door so long before he was announced, had not occurred to me. Now, it flashed on me all at once, and caused me, as my sisters advanced to meet me, with arch, reproachful, and yet congratulatory looks, to feel as though I had been guilty of an unpardonable omission in not apprising my father at first of his arrival. Dora, dear Dora, whose thoughts were ever on her lips, began at once to catechise me respecting Monsieur de Grammont's whereabouts during the full hour, as she said, although I thought it only half that time, that he was missing after his arrival.

I related to her, without reserve, all the circumstances of my unexpected meeting with him, and his earnest entreaty that I would allow him a momentary private interview, before he presented himself to my father.

'My dear Nelly,' said she, 'his sudden disappearance, and eventually yours, for you were not missed at first, have been the cause of a general search through the house and grounds; and my uncle'—lowering her voice—'was so sure of your having been run away with, in some fairy vehicle waiting out of sight for you, while the marquis's was left at the door, 'as a tub for the whale,' that even now, for aught I know, horsemen may be out in every direction, with orders to find and force you back, at every hazard, regardless of any resistance made by your daring kidnapper.'

What could I reply to all this, but express my regret that what was intended but for a 'moment's interview' should have given rise to any pursuit on my account; while I consoled myself with thinking Dora's jest to be without much ground.

Nevertheless, I replied that the light in which she had placed the thing seemed to make it necessary that I should offer some apology or explanation to papa; but on hearing that Monsieur de Grammont and he were together, I had no doubt Léonce had already explained everything to him.

My uncle now approached the table, with Father Ossory, and without noticing me, except by a very grave bend of the head, seated himself at the table.

My mother was already there, and we circled round her. There was very little eating, and less speaking; while all eyes seemed fixed on me with an inquiring expression, very painful to me.

My father had ordered refreshments for himself and Monsieur de Grammont in his study, so that all hope of seeing them at the table was at an end.

I became so frightened amidst the silence around me, that it was with difficulty I withheld myself from being the first to leave the table. Soon, however, my uncle rose; and walking surlily out of the room, Father Ossory followed him, and we saw no more of them.

Dora and I made our retreat to our own boudoir, and shutting the door, we sat on the sofa, while I leant on her shoulder, and told her all that had passed betwixt Léonce and myself.

Her sincere and tender, though playful sympathy, taught me, more than ever, the value of sisterly love and confidence, and enabled me to await, with tolerable composure, the result of the conference below.

Dora soon left me, to learn, if possible, with what success the suit was proceeding in my father's study. She returned in a few minutes; looking fearfully pale, saying she had been bold enough to knock at the study-door, which had been only half opened to her by my father, with a countenance excessively agitated. He waved her off with his hand, without a word; but she had heard the bishop's voice in notes of thunder, and was glad to get out of the hearing of it.

It was impossible not to foresee what the result must be, unless my father should assert an independent opinion, and prove able to emancipate himself from the control of his brother—that brother who owned no allegiance to any principle or power but that of the church, and who considered the sacrifice even of natural affection—if he had any—as a meritorious offering to it.

On learning how matters stood, I cast away all my hopes; and throwing myself on the sofa, that I might hide my face in its pillows, bitterly reproached myself for the folly of the security which I had cherished but an hour since.



'Léonce is right. Yes; we are now for ever separated!' I exclaimed.

Dora did not answer me, but went to the window, which commanded a view of the high road, as it ran over a rising ground in the distance. A telescope on a stand, with which we were accustomed to amuse ourselves, stood before the window. Dora seated herself at this post of observation, while I lay in deep agony, on the sofa. Very soon I heard her crying.

'Is it, then, all over?' I asked.

'I fear it is,' she said. 'I see his chariot driving furiously over the hill, with the grooms after it in full gallop.'

She left the window, and, kneeling before the sofa, embraced me tenderly. Her tears continued to fall, but I could not obtain a similar relief. She felt my pulse.

'I am not fainting,' said I.

'No,' said she, 'but you are very cold. Shall I ring for some wraps?'

'No, no; do not bring people to look at me.'

'I will go myself for a warm cloak,' said she; and shutting the door after her, she was out of hearing in an instant.

The next minute there was a gentle tap at the door, and my father entered. As he saw me stretched on the sofa, he approached it softly, saying, 'Is it you, my love, Helen?'

Finding my throat swelling almost to suffocation at his approach, I was unable to reply. He took one of my hands, and finding it very cold, seemed to think I was insensible; but I immediately showed signs of consciousness, and he bent over me to examine my countenance.

'Is it come to this,' said he, 'that my own darling Helen averts her face from me? Helen, speak to me—reproach me, if you will; but do not look like death!'

'I am only cold,' said I. 'I will sit up.'

'No, no,' said he; 'lie still.'

Dora returned with a down coverlet, and enveloped me in it. We sat perfectly mute for a minute or two, when Dora rose, and left the room.

My father, without losing another moment, said, 'Do not let me hurry you, my love, although my time is short; but tell me

what I may speak of. I have always considered you as my little heroine, with courage enough for any emergency. Shall I try it too much if I tell you that De Grammont has just left the castle, and with me a message for you, which I have no option but to deliver, having promised him that I would do so?

I felt my heart beginning to beat violently, but commanding myself, said, 'I know he is gone, papa; but he should have taken leave of mē.'

'It was not his fault, poor fellow, that he did not. He is really a very fine fellow, and my good opinion of him ought to gratify you.'

A thousand hopes sprang up in my heart at these words, which brought tears that relieved me. 'Ah, papa! it is but natural to you to do justice; yet Monsieur de Grammont must have been treated harshly, to cause him to leave your house so abruptly.'

'Helen, my love, I see there is no occasion for any further hesitation. Your good sense and heroism are returning. As De Grammont has been perfectly frank in explaining the object of the interview which he tells me he *forced* on you this morning, I may speak on the subject, I hope, without paining you too much. As you are aware of his pretensions, then, I need not mention them; but I trust that in declining them, at the instance of your uncle—to whom we must not forget that you now belong, I may not have painfully opposed your own inclinations?'

'Have I, then, no *father*?' I asked, in an agony of grief.

He turned his head away, and waving his hand to deprecate interruption, continued:—'I could not extort from De Grammont any remark indicating acquaintance with your feelings. I was glad to find that you must have left him ignorant of them, whatever they are. It is but a natural and essential defence of woman, that she wrap herself up in impenetrable reserve until the marriage-knot is tied. Yet, I hardly expected to find you, who are naturally frank and sincere, and fresh to this sort of sentiment, so strictly prudent, and steeled against the solicitations of so eloquent and impassioned a pleader as I am sure De Grammont must be.'

‘Oh! my dear father, do not torture me with praise which I do not deserve. I am totally destitute of the prudence and mental reserve you ascribe to me. I have given my whole heart to Léonce, who had already given me his, and we have exchanged irrevocable vows, which, if there is truth or honour in human nature, can never be broken!’

It was now my father’s turn to be moved. He threw himself back in his chair with a deep sigh, covering his eyes with his hand, as if stunned by surprise, or overpowered by a rush of painful feelings. While I sat half up on the sofa, gazing on him with the most anxious concern for the effect of my precipitate acknowledgment, he suddenly rose, and left the room. I hoped that he had only gone away for a moment, but he did not return for half an hour.

Meantime, thoughts and regrets, and hopes and fears, were chasing each other through my troubled mind; but always ending in the dear recollection, that however sundered for the moment, Léonce and I were one! This was an unalterable fact, although we might live to old age before we met again. But the message charged to be delivered by my father—what could *that* be?

When he returned, he looked very grave and thoughtful. Taking a seat by my side, he said, ‘Much as your communication pained me, Helen, I am glad I know all, as I am enabled thereby to offer you more useful advice.

‘I must, however, discharge myself of my commission before I enter on anything else. Do not allow it to agitate you, or even render you secure, of what is always uncertain, the constancy of an absent lover.’

I covered my face, for my father looked anxiously at me, with a sadness that expressed compassion, and thus awakened fears that hope had lulled to sleep.

‘As I walked with the marquis to his carriage,’ said he, ‘after the storm betwixt him and your uncle had, as it were, swept him out of the house, he entreated me, as he could not obtain a parting word with you, to be the bearer of a message from him. Struck with surprise at such a request, although the *mitrea* affront, which he had just received in my house, made it seem

necessary that I should make some *amende*—I hesitated. But recollecting that this civility, although a sort of trespass on prudence, was the only expression of respect now in my power, for the generous and noble sentiments he had professed for my darling child, I consented to his request. I fear, my dear, that your father is yet too inexperienced in the management of his children's love affairs to perform a part in them as coldly as he ought. But I will have no reserve with you, and I am sure I may then entrust you to the guidance of your own mind. The message was this—"Say to *your* and *my* Helen, that the sentiments I have this day professed for her will be as lasting as my life!" Does this satisfy you, Helen? I feel it my duty, in repeating this enthusiastic assurance, which is, I have no doubt, sincere at present, to apprise you, if it has not already occurred to you, that such vows are often cancelled by time and distance. In one word, they are forgotten.'

'Never, by a man of honour, like De Grammont, papa!'

'I almost envy you such faith in another, my love. But you will soon acquire a knowledge of human fallibility in such matters. Meanwhile, we must prepare ourselves for intervening trials and duties. You are aware that at this moment I owe so much to my brother, that I should be a criminal of the deepest dye, if I could sin against him by violating the conditions on which he from the first consented to save myself and family. One of the principal of these was, that I should bestow *you* on him, and entrust you wholly to his guidance. He saw *that* in your character which pleased him, which inspired him with parental attachment, and which would, he thought, enable him to place you in life advantageously to yourself and family.'

This remark grated very much on my feelings, but my father continued.

'Having thus given you to your uncle, he has accepted the gift, engaging to perform to you the part of a father. Therefore, never again ask me whether you have a father; it breaks my heart. And above all things, never allow yourself to distrust your uncle. He will not fail you, unless you very seriously oppose his will. As regards Monsieur de Grammont, you must give him up, now and for ever. You must not even



think of him. For be assured your uncle will never consent to your marrying him, being, as he is, a determined Protestant.'

'But, papa, as I am also a Protestant, in opinion and in feeling, would not that go far towards cancelling my uncle's objections to the marquis's suit?'

'Oh, my child!' exclaimed my father, 'what a simple creature you are. Have I not told you that it would be utter ruin, both to yourself and me, for the bishop to know that you were in any degree swerving from the Romish church? You have yet much to learn of that allowable subtlety, essential to the successful management of secular affairs.'

'But would not sincerity in all cases better serve our interests than concealment and insincerity? Even in our affairs at this moment, would it not be better that my uncle should be fully informed of everything, although the so doing might require an entire revision of your arrangements with him?'

'I find it very difficult, Helen, to talk to you on this subject. You, who know only the right, and nothing of the wrong which is perpetually conflicting with it in the affairs of life, are utterly unaware of the difficulty of holding the balance between them. I said I would have no reserves with you, and I will not, although I would willingly have spared you the pain of knowing the full extent of your uncle's bitterness towards de Grammont. After expressing to him the most violent opinions upon religious matters, the bishop asserted, in his ordinary strong language, the absolute authority of the church, and her right to punish even with death in all cases, if she so willed it, apostates from her faith. "It has," said he, "only been an oversight or an omission of duty from some other cause on the part of the spiritual executives of the church, that your own life, Monsieur de Grammont, so long forfeited, has hitherto been spared. Nevertheless, to terminate this discussion, if you will *now* renounce your errors, and return to the faith of your forefathers, I will not oppose your union with my niece."

"My lord," said de Grammont, "in what you have just uttered, I presume that you have given me your ultimatum. I have to thank you for the seeming sincerity, though not for the mockery, of your decision, and I will endeavour to reply to you with

equal frankness. You propose to me to return to the Romish church, and as a motive to it, you offer me the greatest boon that earth could bestow on me.

“But it is necessary you should know, that never having been in that church, I cannot be considered as an apostate from it. My life is not, therefore, forfeited to it, even upon its own intolerant and sanguinary principles.

“My parents had become Protestants before I was born; I was baptized in the Protestant church, and, moreover, ever since reason has rendered me capable of judging betwixt the two churches, I have, both from conviction and choice, remained a Protestant. Were I so base as to renounce Protestantism, believing, as I do, that it is founded upon God’s Holy Word, which I hold to be the only test of right and wrong in matters of faith or practice, I should be utterly unworthy of so sincere and upright a being as your niece, nor should I dare to offer my hand for her acceptance, while my heart, was polluted by falsehood to God.”

I had listened with breathless interest to my father’s brief narrative, and in the admiration I felt for Monsieur de Grammont’s brave and manly defence of his faith, almost forgot that I was a party concerned.

Another moment, and tears of pride and joy were pouring down my face, at the recollection that a heart so noble as his, had been proffered to me—that it was, indeed, mine.

‘I understand your feelings, Helen,’ said my father, ‘but I must not foster them by sympathy. My painful task is not yet over. Your uncle scarcely heard the last words of the marquis, when he exclaimed, “Now we understand each other, Monsieur de Grammont; and from this moment, if you attempt to renew an intercourse of any kind with my niece, by letter or by any other means except through myself, I will place her out of your reach for ever, by putting her into a convent for life, in a locality where no human power shall ever reach her.”’

This climax was frightful, but my terror did not overpower my reason; for I thought I saw in it an extravagance of purpose, almost destructive of itself.

Yet, my father assured me that the church would uphold any

ecclesiastic of my uncle's rank in the exercise of such power, if it were deemed advantageous to itself. 'But,' he continued, 'I do not in reality think you have anything to fear from your uncle's ultraism, unless, by the most undutiful resistance to his will, you should provoke him to the exercise of it. I have received his most solemn promises of tenderness and indulgence towards you, and I am sure he will keep those promises, because I believe he really loves you with an affection almost parental.

'And now, my dear Helen, as you know your exact position, you must brace yourself to an heroic submission to what has occurred. As it regards the part which I have myself performed in this drama, it is as useless as it is painful for me to perceive that, if I could have looked into the hearts of those around me, I might have acted differently. But you can know nothing of that imbecility of purpose and of effort which pecuniary embarrassment entails on its victims, and which becomes a deplorable despotism when it coerces a man, as in my case, to the abandonment or transfer of the dearest and most sacred duties. As it is, we must make the best of it; and if we look back to only a few hours since, when your mother and we stood in this room on the very brink of destruction, with numerous others in different parts of the house sleeping unconsciously in their beds, and devoted to the same ruin, we shall find in our wonderful escape from it so much cause for gratitude, that we shall not find it difficult to resign our future to Providence. It is my happiness to know that your mind is accessible, not only to the arguments of reason, but to the feelings of devotion. Let these resume their empire, and you will not waste your energies in unavailing regrets, but forgetting the past, devote yourself to the duties of the present, whatever they may prove!'

My father took me in his arms, and embracing me fervently, left the room.

I did not remain long alone after he had departed, but when I no longer heard his voice, I sat for some time drowned in tears, and lost in thought.

While he was with me, I was sustained by his kindness, and the anxious part which he bore in my distresses. The manner

in which he had taken leave of me indicated that he felt it but as the prelude of the morrow's parting, which, come what might besides, could not be averted.

I longed for rest, for sleep in which I might not dream. I had a confused perception of everything around me. It was as if in one single day the world—*my* world—had been driven out of its orbit, and the balance of everything in life destroyed.

Happily, Dora soon came to seek me, and bear me away with her to another room. The rest of the family were occupied with their own peculiar cares, and we were left to spend the evening together without interruption. We did not attempt to retrace the events of the day. They were cast out of sight as too painful for retrospection. Yet Dora, with her usual playfulness, reminded me that although Pandora's box had been emptied on our hearth, we had not found it bereft of its fabled antidote. 'For surely,' said she, 'if aught in the accidents of life could form a pre-eminent ground of hope for your future happiness, it is to be found in the character and sentiments of Monsieur de Grammont, as they have been decidedly exhibited in the course of this stormy day.'

We did not separate until a late hour ; and then again lingered over our last good night.

When Mary had performed her part, and had left me, a gentle tap, and an opening of my chamber door, announced my mother.

'My dear Helen,' she said, coming to my bedside, 'I could not rest without giving you my sympathy and my blessing, and telling you how deeply I feel the pain of the part assigned you. But we must all obey, when resistance would be criminal, as well as useless ; although we may be allowed to hope for future good.'

'Ah! dear mother,' said I, 'speak not of my untoward destiny!' for I saw that, from her peculiar religious views, she could not cordially enter into my feelings, although her natural tenderness induced her to attempt to alleviate them. I thanked her with tears, and lay down with a mother's kiss on my cheek. She bade me good night, and crossing herself, commended me to the care of the 'blessed Virgin.'



## CHAPTER X.

I PASSED the hours of darkness almost without sleep, in that harrowing thought which disowns tears. Yet the day dawned, and the soft light stole over hill and dale, with as sweet a progress and as joyous an effect as if nothing had happened to me. This was succeeded by the glories of a May morning.

I opened my window, to catch the morning breeze, and contemplate the rich landscape before me, just as the sun made its appearance above the horizon. The tranquillity of the scene, and that indescribable influence which the early morning has upon the senses and the heart, operated as a moral anodyne upon my whole being. As I knelt at the open window, gazing on the visible heavens, which seemed but as a curtain that veiled from human sight the radiance of the celestial world, I devoted myself in deep submission to the will of God, praying that Léonce also might be able to do the same.

When I descended to breakfast, I found all the family assembled. My uncle was amongst them, but I found great difficulty in greeting him with even ordinary courtesy.

We had each of us been apprised by what we had suffered in anticipation of it, of the necessity of self-control, at the last moment. Nevertheless, of what after all could I tell, but of heart-breaking and convulsive weeping; of looks and tones that must live for ever in memory's deepest cells; of death-like dread of never meeting more; of withering thoughts of past and fears for the future.

I was almost insensible as I threw myself back in my uncle's carriage, though still conscious of the swiftness with which I was borne away.

As my uncle sat by my side, I dared not give utterance to my feelings, and therefore forebore to look back through the long avenue of elms, at the grey towers of my home, lest my self-control should forsake me.

My uncle seemed to feel that the parting from my family

must have been very distressing to me. He therefore did not attempt to interrupt the current of my thoughts by conversation; but was attentive and kind in his manner, and seemed well pleased with my apparent tranquillity. I had, indeed, sunk into a torpor of feeling, from which I did not attempt to rouse myself, until we reached the end of our journey.

I then found that Rover, my father's large and beautiful black dog, had accompanied us all the way, in spite of every attempt to drive him back. My favourite pony was also there, which my father had sent with me, and a groom to take care of him; so that I was not without some mementos of home. My uncle had also been prevailed on by my father to allow Mary, though a Protestant, to remain in my service, which was perhaps as great a comfort as I could have had, under the circumstances.

My uncle gave me a cordial welcome as he handed me into his house, a very ancient and imposing mansion, in the neighbourhood of Cork.

The residence appropriated to my use was a detached building, inferior in size to my uncle's, but of the same antique and peculiar character. Both appeared to have been built in troublous times. Perhaps by some religious community, for their protection against attacks. The exterior of the larger building was imposing in its appearance, not only from its size, but from the massy defences that were still in existence on its walls, though fast losing the distinctness of their outline by the crumbling of their edges.

The two residences were rendered easily accessible to each other, though quite distinct, by a long covered winding passage, obscurely lighted from above by glass of various colours inserted in three singularly constructed domes.

Its walls were painted in light and shade, with so peculiar an effect, as to produce an almost startling illusion, at first sight, of passages diverging from it in long perspective; while deep recesses here and there, filled with sepulchral statuary, inspired feelings of awe that induced a novice in its mysteries to hurry rapidly through it.

The first time that I made this attempt, I was suddenly arrested by perceiving that every step I took was responded to

by a quiet, smothered vibration, that communicated itself through its whole length; thus giving notice, as I afterwards learnt, to the porter at its invisible extremity that its precincts had been invaded. The exterior of this passage was completely concealed from without by its being covered with the most luxuriant ivy, that extended itself over the roofs and domes, so as effectually to prevent any recognition of its walls.

I had imagined, until my arrival, that I was to reside in my uncle's house, not being aware that an ecclesiastic is not allowed to have female inmates. I now found that a regular establishment had been formed, and a suite of servants had been engaged for my use alone, at the head of whom was a housekeeper of the name of Mrs. O'Grady. The house was furnished throughout in a most expensive, antique style, suitable to its peculiar architecture, although there was enough of the modern incorporated with it to afford every imaginable comfort to a young and fastidious lady, as my uncle seemed to consider me, who required some indemnity for the want of society, and the heart-breaking separation from her family.

My uncle spent the first evening of my arrival in conducting me through the house allotted to me, and in pointing out the various conveniences that had been collected for my use; strictly charging me, if anything had been omitted which I might desire, to order it of Mrs. O'Grady, the housekeeper.

It was not a moment in which I could feel alive to any minor wants, or appreciate justly the considerate kindness that had provided for the gratification of every wish. How worthless appeared to me the elegance of my accommodations, how valueless even my books and musical instruments, since I had no one to share them with me. My faithful Mary became everything to me. With her I could talk of all we had left; of every favourite tree and flower, as well as of those still dearer objects, who like myself must soon be exiled from home.

But this morbid state of mind did not continue. When my family had actually quitted home, and I had heard of their safe arrival in London, I became more tranquil, and recovered a portion of my former content. It was but natural that so dreadful a wrench should cause lacerations which it required

time to heal; but in youth and health our sorrows are alleviated by the natural tendency of inexperience to hope. We never believe that we are 'born to trouble' until we are subdued by it.

The impossibility of my being ever able to attend a Protestant place of worship while residing with my uncle, I soon ascertained.

The nearest church was five miles distant from us; and although I had a chariot and servants always at my disposal, I could not have used them for such a purpose as that of driving to a Protestant church—bearing as they did the arms and liveries of my uncle,—without committing an outrage on *him* in his public character.

Such an impropriety was only thought of to be at once abandoned; and I endeavoured to satisfy my heart by an Episcopal service and a sermon of Saurin's, in my own apartment, with Mary, every Sunday.

I had been several weeks at my uncle's house pursuing this course, without attending mass. My uncle must have had an inkling of it in some way or other; and I must have been short-sighted not to have foreseen that my shutting myself up for an hour or two with Mary on a Sunday morning, at church hours, must attract the attention of some of the servants of the household. Mary had, indeed, been questioned in the kitchen respecting her whereabouts at such a time; for although it was understood in the family that she was a Protestant, it seemed to be expected, in the housekeeper's room at least, that she should do as others did, by going to some place of worship. She had evaded the questioning, for it was not very urgent, and she was, as yet, a new-comer.

But on dining with my uncle one day, in his own apartment, the servants having withdrawn, he turned sharply round on me, and said—'Helen, my dear, I never see you at mass—I hope you do not neglect worship altogether?'

'No, my dear uncle, I have a service in my own apartment every Sunday.'

'Oh, you prefer private to public worship, do you? I will have an oratory fitted up for you in the house, and one of my



household priests shall do duty for you. Your abigail will, I suppose, have no objection to join you in it? I presume you have not been in the habit of having a service by yourself?’

I saw that my uncle was assuming an air of official dignity and irony in his tone and manner. I therefore replied, gravely — ‘No, my lord; Mary has always joined me in a Sunday morning service.’

‘Humph! She is a Protestant, I think?’

‘Yes, my lord.’

‘Well, Helen, I give you your choice, either to attend a morning mass on Sundays at church, or to have a service in the oratory I propose, with the assistance of a priest.’

‘My lord, I think I should prefer attending mass at church, to having a priest to officiate in private.’

‘That is your decision, is it, my dear?’

‘Yes, my lord, if that will satisfy you.’

‘Your abigail must attend you to mass. I tell you that, Helen; or if she is not willing to do so, you must exchange her for one that will.’

From this time I continued to attend mass once a week, attended by Mary, as required, having our Protestant service in the afternoon.

Our going to mass was distressing to both of us, and a source of many tears; but it caused us to keep a perpetual vigil on ourselves, and to have a higher relish for the heartfelt sincerity and comparative simplicity of our private service. After some time, however, I found a meagreness in this exclusive and solitary worship, which made me long for the house of God, and for that heart-stirring sympathy which can only be felt there, in communion with other and true worshippers. Devotion, like all sentiments of the heart, is contagious; and it is in conformity with this fact that religion requires its votaries, as one means of keeping alive ‘the sacred fire,’ not to ‘forsake the assembling of themselves together.’ But I yearned in vain.

At this period I had the happiness of hearing from the dear wanderers, and receiving accounts of their movements and enjoyments in London, which furnished me with new ideas and new subjects of thought. But their stay there was short, and

the post thence to Cork so lingering in its progress that some two or three letters did not reach me until after the departure of the writers for the Continent.

My sister Dora had the happiness of meeting in London her rejected lover, Sir Lucins Mac Neil, who, on renewing his suit, was accepted, with my father's approbation. It had been arranged for him to follow the party to Paris, where, from my uncle De Carryfort's house, Dora would probably bestow her hand on him.

The following letter was the last I received from my dear sister Dora, before her departure from England, with which I also received long and precious letters from my father and mother, and my sister Caroline:

‘Hanover Square, London, June, 1816.

‘My own darling Nelly,

‘We have been in this wonderful metropolis three weeks, and this is but my third letter to you, and must, for the present, be my last. You, who are probably occupied with the pages of a book in the tranquil retreat of your own apartment, or absorbed in meditation, or oppressed by the quietude around you, may find it difficult to believe in the never-ceasing occupations of a novice seeking initiation into London life.

‘But if I have not written to my dear Nelly so often as I have wished; I have thought of her every hour almost, by night as well as by day, for I have continually dreamt of her. Ah, Nelly! how little did we think a year ago of what has now happened to us. It sometimes seems to me as though we were performing parts in a charade—so utterly crude and unsuitable to ourselves is very frequently our new acting. Our own dear home used to be our world, and we knew little of any other; for though newspapers occasionally fell under our eyes, we read them idly, though for the moment, with great interest. But now vague ideas, which had existed in my mind only as a dream, have become a reality; and I have beheld life—yes, London life—in a full-length picture, with all its accessories legibly defined and rendered intelligible.

‘My own little Nelly, so long my pet, my fondling, why are you not here!

Cruel was the uncle that bore you thus away,  
And cruel is the fate that still constrains your stay.

‘I have not, you perceive, forgotten my old propensity to parody. There is a melting little chant in the above style in vogue here just now, which is sung with great effect by one of the songstresses of the season. I enclose it, but entreat you not to shed too many tears over it.

‘Papa has been unsuccessful in his pursuit of the incendiaries, nor do the police functionaries here give him any hope of success for some time to come. They have put their agents in Ireland on the watch for them, so that if, when they may think themselves forgotten, they should turn up, they may yet be brought to account. The castle is left in the care of Mrs. O’Connell, the housekeeper, and the estate in that of the agent, who has orders to make the lands and farms more productive, by some new modes of management and of agriculture, which are to be adopted without delay.

‘William, who has been desirous of remaining in England, is to accompany us to the Continent, and finish his education at some university there, as papa will not entrust him with the unrestrained freedom he would unavoidably possess if left here in his absence. It is very much to be deplored that he has so strong a self-will, and is so lawless and ungenial in his feelings. He seems to hate the English, and has great pleasure in being rude to them.

‘I cannot omit to mention the dear name of Léonce, whom I am sure we all love, spite of the present position of things. My uncle and aunt dote on him, and think he must in the end conquer the prejudice of the bishop. He is in London, but, though very intimate in Hanover Square, will not, I fear, be seen here while we remain. Considering all the circumstances of the affair, the senseless and bitter opposition that has been made to your union with him is one of the most perverse freaks that fortune ever played to disturb the “course of a true love.” I contemplate with admiration the beautiful resignation with which you have both submitted to a sentence at once unjust and cruel, rather than disturb the arrangements made for retrieving our dear father’s affairs. In this changing world something may, and, I hope, will, yet happen to restore Léonce and you

to each other; and then, to know that your filial sacrifice has been tributary to the happiness of a beloved parent, will render your own blessed indeed.

'Papa and mamma appear to be in their usual health, though sadly out of their element here. We are hurrying to Paris, in the hope of being in time to witness the marriage ceremony of the Duc de Berri, at the Tuileries, with a Neapolitan princess.

'I know not how we shall arrange a future correspondence with you, dearest Nelly. There are so many impediments on the Continent, I am told, to a safe and regular transit of letters, except by our ambassadors' bags, which only in Paris or Vienna could be readily obtained, that you must not be alarmed if you do not hear from us regularly. Forget not our reverential regards to the bishop, nor how much I am, my dearest sister,

'Your ever devoted

'DORA.'

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## CHAPTER XI.

ALTHOUGH I knew beforehand what must take place, yet a new feeling of isolation ran through my frame, when I was first informed of the actual embarkation for a foreign shore of those dear relatives from whom, for the first time, I had been so lately severed. Every relic of them and of our deserted home became doubly dear to me. Rover was caressed with tears, and the low, tender whine with which he recognised them seemed comfort to my heart. Even my pony, as I spoke to him of the stable and manger that he would see no more, responded by a gentle neigh; while the groom, touched by the recollections of his late home, patted the pony fondly, and, with solemn earnestness, promised me that 'Daffy' should be cared for like a child.

Mary—my good and affectionate Mary, who entered into all my home-sorrows—would have been spoilt at this time, if indulgence could have spoilt her. I was very thankful for these remnants of happiness departed; although I sometimes became cold and inanimate as marble, if, sitting alone unoccupied, I fell into retrospection of what, at that time, seemed my long life.



This proneness to reverie, so baneful to health, and so subversive of the resolutions I had formed for the government of myself, I generally endeavoured, though not always with success to avoid by a constant variety of occupation and exercise. Mary, like most country girls, knew something of managing a horse; and with a little instruction, she soon became proficient enough in riding to accompany me in this daily exercise, which I had never enjoyed when attended only by a groom.

I seldom saw my uncle oftener than once a day—sometimes but once a week, according as his duties, which were generally absorbing, occupied him. As my uncle scarcely ever dined with me, my table was accustomed to be served for myself alone; and although I felt, at first, like a prisoner immured for some offence, and cut off from sympathy with his kind, I became at length satisfied with eating alone. At first my table was luxuriantly covered, but I could not approve of this sort of parade; and by expostulation with the housekeeper, the supplies were simplified, so as better to suit the taste of youth and health.

My uncle possessed an ample income, and seemed to consider it due to his dignity that his niece should be surrounded by profusion and show; while in his own personal gratifications, the poorest priest in his diocese was not more abstinent and self-denying. This trait in his character inspired me with reverence, and induced me to aim at emulating it.

I was not long permitted to pursue without interruption the quiet way of life I had proposed to myself, as no sooner were the female friends of my uncle aware of my having been adopted by him, than they hastened to pay homage to him by attentions to his niece. He had no very near neighbours, but Cork and its vicinity supplied me with a constant succession of morning visitors, who, as the season for social entertainments arrived, covered my table with invitations, and sought me with an ardor so flattering, that, much as I was desirous of framing excuses for declining their proffered hospitalities, I felt it would be ungrateful, both to my uncle and his friends, not to accept them.

The first entrance of a novice into society is always an experiment upon herself, but an experiment also on the world around her.

The courtesies of the festive scene, although I had been accustomed to behold them in my father's house, were seen there only with the eye of a child, who bore no part in them, and who contemplated them but as a spectacle to amuse her. Now that I had become a sharer in them, I was charmed with the importance they appeared to confer on me, but far more with the solace they offered to my heart, so long as I construed them to mean kindness. They diminished in value as their conventional character betrayed itself, and I was compelled to perceive there was nothing intrinsic in them. Only my inexperience could have led me into the error of believing them to be indications of attachment. Nevertheless, my heart was lacerated and thrown back upon itself, when the illusion was dispelled.

Eventually, I discovered that I was not formed for what is called pleasure, and that the pursuit of it was but strenuous idleness, which, while exciting, was unsatisfying, leaving its votary without purpose, vapid, querulous, and unthankful—yes, and ungrateful, too, for although I was praised and admired beyond all reason and moderation, I was dissatisfied. I wanted something more than to be entitled one of the 'Graces,' or to be pronounced a 'Psyche,' or to be told that I was an 'enchantress.' Even sonnets to my 'eyes of violet,' my 'locks of auburn,' or my 'nose of more worth than a kingdom,' did not interest me. I know not how it was, but these epithets—ungrateful as I was—sounded like mockery, and I wanted some one to whom, on my return from an assembly, I could relate all the extravagances that had been addressed to me, and with whom I might have laughed or wept, as mirth or melancholy was in the ascendant.

The day after a ball, I had so many anonymous love-letters that I began to be afraid, at a succeeding party, to reply to the various *rattle* addressed to me in dancing, lest I might get, unawares, entangled in an engagement. But there was no retreating until the end of the season, as it was my uncle's will that I should see something of the world, as he was pleased to call the assemblies of Cork.

Towards the end of the season, an incident occurred in which my feelings were deeply interested.

A very distinguished Parisian artist had been introduced into some of the circles in which I visited, who was so much lauded and courted by everybody, that I could not avoid observing him. He was never introduced to me, but I observed his eyes so constantly following me, that his incessant observance became like a persecution. I was sometimes on the point of shedding tears at it, so much did it affect my imagination. Very soon, however, he disappeared ; I did not ask whither he had gone, and I forgot him.

One day, some time after, as I was driving through Cork in one of my uncle's carriages, I saw a painting of a full-length female figure, at a shop window, which seemed, at the first glance, so familiar to me, that I looked intently at it, when, to my great astonishment, I discovered it was a painting of myself. A crowd of persons was standing before the picture, commenting on it, and amongst them some young men whom I knew, who, on recognising me, flew to the carriage window, exclaiming sportively, that a 'divine-looking creature,' resembling me, was then receiving the homage of the mob.

I was excessively annoyed, and drove on as fast as possible, complaining to my uncle, on my arrival at home, of what had occurred, and begging him to ascertain how such an impertinence could have originated, as that of making me a public gazing-stock, without my permission or knowledge.

How little did I suspect the author of this offence ! It proved, however to be the French artist, whom I have already mentioned, and who had been sent to Cork by Monsieur de Grammont, expressly to obtain a likeness of me for himself—not certainly to be exhibited to the public of Cork.

My uncle's interference for the removal of the picture from a public window became unnecessary, as by the time his messenger had reached the place of exhibition, both picture and painter were crossing the Channel. Some of my friends had remonstrated with the artist previous to his departure, for the offensive publicity which had been given to the painting, who excused himself by saying that he had exhibited it solely to test the resemblance, and the experiment had satisfied him, by the recognition it had obtained.

When I learnt for whom this painting had been made, what a rush of rapturous sensations filled my heart! What did not this incident imply of constancy in the sentiments of Léonce! I blessed the accident that had made me acquainted with it, not doubting that this mute resemblance would plead for me in absence, and prevent me from being forgotten; for although I confided fully in Léonce, as though I had exchanged vows of marriage with him, yet, holding no kind of intercourse with him, anxious thoughts would sometimes assail me for the fallibility of human memory.

I had reason to regret my too jealous pride in complaining to my uncle of the exposure of my picture, as it furnished him with an apparent cause for attributing 'indelicacy and impertinence' to Monsieur de Grammont—qualities which, he said, were characteristic of Protestants all over the world, who never knew how to reverence anything, except their own 'peculiar and damning heresies.'

I did not venture to palliate or explain what he condemned, as it was too painful to me to hear Monsieur de Grammont thus spoken of, and I had no hope of convincing my uncle of the wrong he did him.

The visiting season was not yet over, and my uncle, irritated by the affair of the picture, resolved that I should not again appear in public in any dress I had worn during the preceding part of the season. Without my being consulted, a London *modiste* was engaged to furnish me with new and costly dresses, in which I was destined to eclipse myself, as well as my compeers, thus asserting my own superiority and my uncle's prodigality. It was not without anxiety that I heard of this preparation for a distinction which I did not covet; it would have been more agreeable to me to have been attired simply as hitherto, so as not to attract attention, as it always intimidated me to find myself distinguished by anything strikingly different from those around me. In this case, the London costumes provided for me were so far in advance of the newest modes of Cork, as to be very remarkable, and although it was impossible not to admire their perfect elegance, I felt that I was too young to take the lead in fashion, and too timid to bear the censures which an assumption was certain to bring on me.



I ventured to express somewhat of this to my uncle, but it only made him more determined to distinguish me, and show the world his opinion of what was due to his neice. I suspected that he had another motive: perhaps I did him wrong; but from some expressions which one day escaped him, I thought he was desirous of making me conspicuous for vanity, so as to render me offensive to Monsieur de Grammont, who he presumed would hear of my display, and thus be rent from me by my own folly.

The incident of the painting had incensed him to a great degree, and filled him with vague apprehensions, so that he could not be persuaded but that Monsieur de Grammont was living disguised in our neighbourhood, and keeping a perpetual vigil on me. Under this impression, he gave me peremptory orders never to stir out of the house without the attendance of two men servants. The restraint which this requirement imposed on me put an end to my pleasant country walks with Mary, and even to my saunterings in the park and garden, whither I found myself constantly pursued, as though I had been insane. I soon learnt that even when I attended a party I was to be accompanied by my uncle, or a priest of his household.

I was so frightened by this perpetual parade of looking after me, and so apprehensive that it might end in putting me into a convent for life, that I wrote to my aunt in London, telling her of my position and my fears, and begging her to invite me to her house. She replied that she would immediately do as I requested her, although she feared it would prove useless, as she thought the bishop's plans for me were formed, and would require me to remain where I was. I never heard from her again on the subject.

Every letter addressed to me, from whatever quarter, was externally examined and inquired about, before I was allowed to open it, and then only in the presence of my uncle. As I had no correspondents but amongst my own dear family, there were no discoveries to make; but it mortified me to be obliged to expose the many anonymous and foolish love-letters which still continued to be addressed to me, both in verse and prose.

The first time I wore one of my London dresses, my uncle inspected my appearance before I went out, and informed me

that he should join the party to which I was going for half-an-hour before it broke up, and himself bring me home. I had hitherto been accustomed to be attended inside the carriage only by Mary, whom I had always considered sufficient to afford me ample protection. However, there could be no possible objection to a double guard, if it was thought necessary, and I submitted with as good a grace as I could to a priest's seating himself by the side of Mary.

The incident of the picture had become known to the whole circle, on the evening in question, by the time I reached the assembly; so that I now appeared in a new character, every one looking upon me as an engaged person, which delivered me from much of the excessive attention that had hitherto been paid me by those whom I suspected of being the authors of the anonymous love-letters.

When my uncle arrived, with his attendant priests, he created a great sensation in the circle, and seemed in unusual health and spirits. After greeting his friends, he took my arm, and drawing it within his, desired me, as we walked round the room, to point out to him those young men whom I supposed to have written the silly letters he had seen.

I was so terrified at the idea of being called upon to turn informer thus at random against those from whom I had received only a ridiculous excess of homage, that it almost made me ill; for I was apprehensive that my uncle, under some impetuous or eccentric impulse, might call them to account at a venture, on the spot. I was so agitated as to be obliged to sit down; and drawing my uncle away to the most obscure corner I could find, prevailed on him to take a seat by my side. From this nook he again required me to point out those in the assembly who had been most attentive to me.

I evaded his requirement by telling him that it would be invidious in me to make distinctions, where every one had shown me so much courtesy. He was not satisfied with this reply; and I earnestly hoped within myself never to attend another of these parties, since every frivolity was to be thus scrutinized and accounted for, and perhaps impressed with a meaning which had never been dreamt of.

My head was bewildered, and my ordinary perception at a stand, in trying to discern my uncle's object in all his perplexing questionings and embarrassing arrangements for my safety. Observation was ever on me, and those around me were 'taking notes.'

I had not heard from my family for some time, but as we arrived at home after the party I have mentioned, a letter from Paris was awaiting me, from my sister Dora. It was dated four months back, for although destined for the ambassador's bag, it had not come by that conveyance, and had probably been mis-sent, as it had been so long detained on its way.

Considering the prevalent practice at that time of breaking seals in the Paris post-office, it surprised me, when I had read the saucy contents of my sister's letter, that it had ever reached me at all; but there was a freedom of speech in Parisian society, after the second return of Louis XVIII., respecting the royalties of the day, which would not in ordinary times have been tolerated.

My father's party had been presented at the court of the Tuileries, and been very flatteringly received, as all British subjects were at that time, by the royal family of France. Dora expressed in her letter an apprehension that papa and mamma were not in their usual health. They were, she said, fatigued and dispirited by perpetual movement and the discomforts of change, but they were looking forward to a period of repose when they reached Vienna. My sister still dated from the hôtel of my uncle the Count de Carryfort, by whom the whole family had been entertained, during a long visit, with true Irish hospitality.

Their stay in Paris was to be continued but a very short time longer, and my sister's marriage had been deferred until the arrival of the party at Vienna. Sir Lucius MacNeil had preceded them thither, to apprise my uncle, the baron, of the time when he might expect his guests, and also to make arrangements for his own sojourn there.

The priest suspected of being the accomplice of Margaret Brian, was encountered by my father in one of the streets of Paris; but as he endeavoured to seize him, there was a recogni-

tion on the part of the priest, which induced him to take to his heels; and he being no doubt well acquainted with the hiding-places of Paris, was out of sight in a moment. M. de Carryfort had been already informed of the affair of the stolen jewels, and of the parties suspected of abstracting them; and now that one of them had been seen in the streets, he advised my father to apply at once to the police, and require aid for the discovery of the priest. Within a week he was found; but, too wise to await an investigation, he took refuge in the protection of the church, from which it would have been impossible, without a process of law, to withdraw him. My father demanded him of his ecclesiastical superiors, on the ground of a felony having been committed in Ireland, in which he was suspected of being an actor.

But they asserted their right to withhold him, and vindicated the offence alleged in a way that indicated some knowledge of the circumstances of the case; and concluded by telling my father that, by the civil law of France there was no redress there for a felony committed in another country, even if it could be proved. It was therefore thought necessary to await the chances of the future; and make no further attempt, at present, for the discovery of the criminals.

The terms in which Dora had spoken of the health of my father and mother filled me with anxiety, nor could I persuade myself but that they must be seriously unwell. On the following morning, however, a very cheerful letter arrived from my father to my uncle, informing him of the party's having reached Vienna, and of the unbounded warmth and welcome with which they had been received by my mother's brother, whom she had not before seen since her marriage.

It would have been difficult for me to decide whether pain or pleasure predominated, after perusing such memorials of a separation which more than ever realized the certainty of the distance that intervened betwixt us.



## CHAPTER XII.

It was about a fortnight after this period that I was again engaged to an evening party in the vicinity of Cork. It was professedly to be a small and select party; but rumour said that it would be given with unusual splendour.

My uncle was amongst the invited guests, and I received from him directions to attire myself in one of my London dresses, with great care. I obeyed his directions, and succeeded in dressing myself perfectly to his satisfaction.

There was some unusual parade on this occasion in the arrangements for our drive, though it was not longer than five miles. A new chariot and four of my uncle's, fitted with patent lamps, and brilliantly lighted, was brought to the door of the hall, preceded by the old coach, bearing the attendant priests of the household. Mary, who was always anxious to see the wraps provided for my return put carefully into the carriage with me, was standing in the hall, as my uncle took my hand to lead me out.

It was the ordinary time for the arrival of the post, and a servant stepped quickly across the hall from an inner door, just at that moment, with the accustomed salver of letters, which he presented to my uncle, inquiring if he should carry them to his study. As my uncle glanced at them, he observed a large packet with a black seal on it, and instantly dropping my hand, seized the portentous-looking letter, and hurried with it through the library into his private study.

I had caught a glimpse of the black seal, and was following him without knowing that I did so. As he was closing the study door, he turned to me, and said, mildly,—‘Be not alarmed, my dear; I will let you know if there is anything here that concerns you.’

I saw, however, that he was agitated—doubtless he had recognised the post-mark. I had waited in fearful silence many

minutes, leaning on the arm of Mary, when I heard stifled exclamations and bursts of feeling from the study, which told me but too truly, that whatever the contents of the letter, they must be terrible to my uncle, as he was not wont on ordinary occasions to suffer from immoderate feeling.

My thoughts were already in Vienna, but I tore them away; for it was not endurable to suppose there could be any connexion betwixt the black seal and it. Nevertheless, my apprehensions were agonising, and I knelt down, almost prostrate on the floor, as if in that attitude I could better bear whatever infliction might await me. Mary reminded me that my uncle had a large circle of correspondents, and his lordship, she said, must have many friends whom I knew not. It was therefore probable that his violent emotions might be caused by some occurrence wholly unconnected with his own family.

I was willing to think that she was right, and that it was indeed premature, if not ridiculous, for me to agitate myself with my own imaginings.

I arose and moved across the room, nearer to the study door, and again heard groans and sobs. 'Mary,' said I, softly, 'it is worse than you imagine!' I leant over the back of a chair, in a paroxysm of suspense and fear.

The study door opened—I was full in front of it—and lifting up my head, I saw my uncle, pale as death, standing in the doorway, in an attitude of distraction. As his eyes met mine, he exclaimed, in a voice of passionate emotion,—'Go! child of the dead! Cover thyself with sackcloth, and put ashes on thy beautiful head! for thy father "lieth down, and riseth not again, until the heavens be no more!"'

As these terrible and too descriptive words fell on my ear; they pierced my soul; my heart was rent—a shriek of horror burst from me—I felt myself falling, and for a brief space I escaped from consciousness.

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But it too soon returned, and although in the first moments of recovery I was insensible to what had occurred, and gazed vacantly on those around me, the dreadful reality was soon recalled, and with it came to my recollection a former awaking

from a similar death, when a dear mother and sisters hung over me, and a beloved father's voice greeted my recovery.

Then came on the hour of quick, conscious, overwhelming agony, from which I could not again escape into insensibility, although I desired it as ardently as one of old, who in his anguish exclaimed, 'Oh that thou wouldst hide me in the grave!'

But we cannot die when we would ; we must wait 'till our change come.' I refused all restoratives, all aid, whispering to Mary that I would be alone. It was not without effort that she succeeded in obtaining this boon for me, but after awhile I was left to silence and to prayer. It is in such moments that we draw near to God,—in such moments that the suppliant sufferer finds access to him, and that Divine compassion stoops to listen to his sighs.

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Oh, how many days, and weeks, and months, must the lacerated heart continue to bleed, under such a bereavement as mine, ere it can accustom itself to the loss! Amongst the many afflicting events that have since marked my lot, none ever inflicted severer pangs than those caused by my dear father's death.

It was only the divine doctrine of the resurrection that sustained me under my affliction at this period. I had never before reflected on it with a feeling of personal interest in it, or attached to it that immense importance which it bears in the system of Christianity. 'He shall rise again,' are Divine words, which I repeated to my heart whenever it began afresh to sink ; and although I well knew, from the tenor of the New Testament, that the state of my dear father must be fixed, yet so agonizingly did I desire his eternal happiness, that I could not but join in the prayers that were offered for the repose of his soul, as if they had been those of faith. It was not in the spirit of Popery that I did this: my aspirations were but the irrepressible outpourings of love and apprehension for an earthly parent, to that Almighty Father in Heaven whose compassions are infinite.

The offices of religion had become far more than ever necessary to me ; I could not live without them. I needed to be brought into hourly intercourse with Him who is invisible, that I might lean upon his everlasting arm, and be saved from myself,

and from that feeling of nothingness into which I was for ever sinking. Under this want of Divine aid, I often found myself worshipping in a church against whose many and signal errors my understanding and my conscience continued to bear the most decided testimony. But in remembering the character and requirements of Him with whom we have to do, I became satisfied, that as I could not, at that time, worship him in any other church, I might, like Naaman the Syrian, when his duty to an earthly power carried him 'to the house of Rimmon,' be also forgiven, and go in the assurance of that forgiveness, although no prophet's voice had said to me, as to him, 'Go in peace.'

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### CHAPTER XIII.

SEVERAL weeks had passed, during which I received letters from my sisters; but they did not contribute to my tranquillity, as they imparted none of those particulars preceding and accompanying the event of my father's death which it would have been so gratifying to me to know. My sisters were, indeed, evidently too distracted by their grief to be able to dilate on the subject, or even to write tranquilly on it; and in this I saw an aggravation of the calamity. Of my mother I learnt nothing, but that she was overwhelmed by the stroke; and Sir Lucius Mac Neil—almost a brother—was not named or alluded to.

My uncle, meantime, began to exhibit serious symptoms of declining health. He had never recovered the shock of my father's death, and had, indeed, become a very altered man in all respects since that event, and his present appearance and symptoms inspired me with the deepest anxiety.

He frequently spent his evenings with me, and would sometimes converse freely respecting my family and their future prospects. My brother was not yet of age, and accounts of a painful nature respecting his health and conduct had more than once been communicated by my mother, previous to my father's



death, so that we were not without considerable uneasiness on his account.

My uncle's health did not improve with the season of spring, and I frequently visited his apartments, to pay him those attentions which my affection and anxiety for him dictated. The practice had grown into a habit, when one day, on entering his study, I found there a gentleman who was a stranger to me. I was making a precipitate retreat, when my uncle commanded me to return, and at the same instant introduced Mr. Fitzgerald to me, who addressed me at once with so easy an air of assurance, that I could not but feel displeased. He was young and handsome, but there was an expression in his eye which made me shrink from his glance. I was not long in finding a pretext for withdrawing, but Mr. Fitzgerald remained with my uncle a long time after I had left the room, and on the same evening, my uncle formally sent to desire my attendance in his study. I obeyed the summons, and found him more indisposed and more serious than usual.

After recognising my entrance by a slight nod, he sat looking into the fire, as if in deep and painful rumination. I did not presume to interrupt him by making any inquiries, and he at length broke a silence which was becoming portentous to me, by saying,—

‘This has been a day of events, my dear Helen, and some of them of a distressing nature; but we are not the arbiters of destiny, and can neither prevent nor ward off that which has been appointed for us.’

‘What has happened, my dear uncle? Have you received any intelligence from Germany? Is my mother ill—or my brother worse?’ I asked, with a trembling heart.

‘I have received letters,’ said my uncle.

‘Are there none for me?’

‘Yes, there are also letters for you; but I wish to prepare you for their contents. Your brother——’

My uncle paused, unable to finish his sentence. I anticipated all he would say, but could not make any rejoinder. In a faltering tone, he added—

‘Your brother is no more!’

After a short pause, he continued, 'By his death, the estate goes to your uncle in London; and your mother and sisters are, by this terrible event, robbed of every pecuniary resource, except your mother's small hereditary property. You see, my dear Helen, and feel too, how distressing these melancholy occurrences, one after another, must be to your poor mother and sisters. It is well, at this period of calamities, that they are with your uncle the baron, at Vienna. Providence is also merciful to us, in sending the good to balance the evil; in proof of which, I have to communicate to you information which, though it cannot at this moment interest you as much as it might at another time, will not, I hope, displease you. I have this day received for you an offer of marriage, from a young man whom I greatly approve, and to whom I wish almost as well as I do to you. I hope, therefore, that when you become acquainted with him, you will find him agreeable enough for a husband.'

My uncle paused for a reply, but I could make none; my faculties were completely stunned.

'You must excuse my announcing, in one interview, such discordant occurrences, my dear child; I do not feel well, and my mind is greatly affected by the adversities that have befallen your family. It is my intention to do all in my power to mitigate them; and there are circumstances in my health, which admonish me, that in accomplishing this I ought to lose no time.'

A painful silence succeeded this last speech, interrupted only by my sobs and tears, which I had no power to restrain. I know not how my uncle was occupied, for I did not uncover my eyes; but after pacing some time up and down the room with an agitated step, he rang for Mrs. O'Grady, at whose appearance he kissed me tenderly, and confiding me to her care, desired her to accompany me to my own rooms.

Events appeared to be conducting the fortunes of my family to a frightful crisis. My father and brother both dead—the estate lost to the family—and my mother and sisters reduced thereby to comparative indigence; my uncle in declining health, and myself called on to make an immediate decision on a question which could not but be most repugnant to me, how much

soever insisted on by my uncle. Had I not already had some experience in suffering, I should have sunk under it.

I dismissed Mrs. O'Grady, and in the solitude of my own apartment gained sufficient fortitude to peruse my letters. They informed me but too soon of the cause of my brother's death. He had been killed on the spot in a duel, his antagonist surviving him only a few hours. How much cause did I find in such a death for that grief which admits of no consolation! I dared not reflect on it, and I almost equally feared to turn to the pecuniary distresses of my mother.

My uncle, like myself, passed a sleepless night; and in the morning appeared to be more indisposed than he had been the day before.

He renewed the subject of the marriage proposal with an earnestness of manner that made me afraid to express the determination I had formed to decline it, although my repugnance became, if possible, stronger, when I was informed that my suitor was Mr. Fitzgerald.

I now remembered to have seen him at the winter balls, although he had never been introduced to me; and in the interval that had elapsed, he had entirely faded from my memory.

It was impossible for any suit to have been advocated with more zeal, by a third person, than was Mr. Fitzgerald's by my uncle; but the state both of my affections and my family affairs rendered it an odious subject to my thoughts, and nothing but the too visible indisposition of my uncle could have induced me to remain in his society while he made it the theme of his conversation.

I endeavoured to convince him that not only was I disinclined to think at all of marriage, but that Mr. Fitzgerald was by no means the man I could ever accept as a husband.

This assertion, made perhaps in too decided terms, irritated my uncle; and he reproached me with my partiality for Protestants and foreigners as the cause of my dislike. Then, regarding me with a fixed seriousness of look, while great depression was marked on his face, he addressed me in a solemn tone, as nearly as I can recollect, in the following words:—'My dear Helen, when your father gave you to me, I engaged to be to you what

he had it not in his power to be—the provider for your future life. The misfortunes that have happened to your mother and sisters in his death, and subsequently in the loss of the estate by the death of your brother, have rendered the fulfilment of my engagement more difficult than I had supposed it would be. Had I only you to provide for, I could leave you a fortune sufficient to secure you an ample independence, and consequently your freedom on the subject of marriage. But now, situated as your mother and sisters are, it is incumbent on me to divide that property which was intended to have been wholly yours, amongst you all. I had begun to feel a distressing anxiety on account of the necessity of thus reducing your station in life, when Mr. Fitzgerald made a proposal of marriage for you. I hailed this occurrence as an intervention of Providence on your behalf, as well as mine; for Mr. Fitzgerald is in possession of an income of ten thousand per annum, and will make a competent settlement on you; which, in addition to what I shall still be able to do for you, will place you in very easy circumstances, and enable you to retain that consideration in society to which you are entitled. Fitzgerald is well-born, well connected, well educated, and, I believe, without vices; and to crown all, he seems to have been deeply impressed in your favour, my dear Helen,’ said my uncle, smiling, ‘since he has cherished in silence an attachment formed two or three months since.’

‘But, my dear uncle, I do not like Mr. Fitzgerald; and I assure you I would rather live single my whole life than marry him. I have no desire to marry at present: it could not increase my happiness, and it would, besides, take me from you. Inform Mr. Fitzgerald of my sentiments, and assure him that I am too incapable of attachment to be worthy of him. He has my best wishes for his happiness.’

My uncle shook his head angrily.

‘How like a simpleton you talk,’ said he. ‘What are you to do when your uncle, as well as your father and brother, is no more? Look at me, child; do you not see disease in my countenance? Do you not know that death is in its train? Have you reflected on what it would be for you to be left in this jostling world without a male protector? To whom will you look



to stand between you and those rapacious spirits that are ever on the watch to make a prey of the defenceless? Were you married to Fitzgerald, you might offer both a protector and an asylum to your mother and sisters; and in making the happiness of an excellent man, you would become the dispenser of it to your whole circle. One thing I demand of you, in the name of that parent who is not here to require it for himself,—that you will, at least, receive the visits of Fitzgerald in my apartments, and in my society, and thus give yourself an opportunity of becoming acquainted with him, and of ascertaining his merits—that you may not throw away a gem in ignorance of its value. I am quite aware of the present state of your feelings, as well as of the unsuitableness of the moment for entertaining such a subject; but I have already given you my reasons for my reluctance to postpone it. Good God! the very idea of your being left without a home, and without a guide, subdues and destroys me. I give you two days to reflect on what I have said. I know that in a well-principled mind, duty is paramount to everything, and I anticipate your acquiescence in my requirement.'

So saying, he dismissed me to my apartment. My uncle was not mistaken in thinking me capable of sacrificing inclination to duty, provided the duty were ascertained; but in this case I could not discern how it had become my duty to barter at once sincerity, delicacy, and propriety, by receiving the visits of a man who was disagreeable to me, for the deliberate purpose of endeavouring to cultivate a sentiment which I felt it would be impossible for me to entertain.

Besides which, although it was a long time since I had heard anything of Monsieur de Grammont, except in the affair of the picture, and it had wounded me deeply that he had not addressed a single line of condolence, either to my uncle or myself, on the occasion of my father's death, yet I doubted not of the constancy of his attachment to me, nor could I root from my heart the tenderness he had inspired. I did not then know, nor for years after, that he had not omitted the dues of courtesy on this occasion; but that he had written a note to me, and with, a delicacy which belonged to all he did, had enclosed it, unsealed,

in an address to my uncle, entreating him to hand it to me. My uncle had thought proper to suppress it, and to withhold from me all knowledge of the occurrence.

I ruminated day and night, of the interval allotted me for consideration, uncertain in what way to communicate to my uncle, in the least offensive manner, the determination I had formed from the first, to reject Mr. Fitzgerald's proposals. The more I reflected, the more I was convinced that it was as incompatible with honour as with inclination, and the consideration due to Mr. Fitzgerald, to suffer any further intercourse to take place, seeing there was no probability of my ever being able to realize the object proposed by it.

I imparted this conviction to my uncle by note, hoping that this mode of conveying my sentiments might prevent a renewal of the subject in conversation.

The expedient proved most disastrous. My note was no sooner perused, than it threw my uncle into a fit of anger, such as I had until then thought it impossible for him to be liable to under any circumstances.

No doubt much of the irritation was attributable to the state of his health, and his extreme anxiety on my account, although it was also evident that, unaccustomed to opposition, the pride of authority had been wounded by my resistance to his will.

It was about an hour after I had sent my note, that a servant came running into my room, in great alarm, to beg that I would go instantly to the bishop, who, he said, appeared to be so ill that he almost feared he was dying.

The recollection of my note filled me with terror; and fearing that to intrude on my uncle uncalled for, in the first moments of his displeasure, might but increase rather than appease his agitation, I inquired if his lordship had sent me any message, and was informed that he was unable to speak. This intelligence put all my discretion to flight. Scarcely able to control my fears, I flew down stairs, and passing into his house in breathless agitation, rushed into my uncle's study.

He had thrown himself into an arm-chair, and sat with his head reclining on the back of it, while his left arm hung at its length over the elbow of the chair, with the offensive note in

his hand. His eyes were closed, his features slightly convulsed, and his whole complexion pale as death, while his lower lip quivered violently. I moderated my haste at the first glance of him, and approached him softly. His appearance so shocked me, that an exclamation of alarm, which I was not able to suppress, caused him to open his eyes. The moment he perceived me, he drew himself up in his chair, and regarded me with an air of such stern dignity as fixed me like a statue before him.

‘Pray, Miss Mulgrave,’ said he, with the most distinct articulation, and in a sarcastic tone of voice, ‘to what am I indebted for the honour of your presence here? You have chosen to adopt a new mode of intercourse with me, to which you should be consistent enough to confine yourself.’

‘Oh, my dear uncle,’ I exclaimed, throwing myself at his feet, ‘they told me you were very ill. How then could I coldly stand on ceremony, and await your permission to visit you? Indeed, I fear you are very ill—you look pale and agitated,’ and as I said this, I unconsciously threw a glance at the offensive note still in his hand. The recognition did not escape him, but seemed to renew his anger; for with a most perturbed air, he peremptorily desired me to rise and leave him. My distress on his account, however, forbade my compliance; without an effort to restore him to his wonted composure.

‘You are angry with me, my dear uncle,’ said I, ‘and you call me Miss Mulgrave, as if I were no longer your affectionate and devoted niece. What have I—’ here my uncle interrupted me with a sarcastic and bitter repetition of the words ‘affectionate and devoted.’

‘These are words of derision, I presume, Miss Mulgrave, if they have any meaning at all. Persons who are “devoted and affectionate,” are not accustomed to treat with contempt the objects of their affection and devotion—to oppose their wishes—disdain their advice—and set at naught their commands. But I shall hold no further conference with a young lady whose acquiescence in a scheme of happiness, not of her own invention, would be solicited in vain, even by a parent from another world. I have nothing more to say, Miss Mulgrave; you may retire.’

How deeply did I feel at that moment that it was not a parent

with whom I was conversing. I arose instantly from before him, and, retreating a few paces, said: 'It is perhaps impertinent in me to attempt to reply to you, my lord, after having been commanded from your presence. But it is necessary that I say a few words in my own defence. I see that you are displeased at the note I have addressed to you. I assure you it was not without great pain that I yielded to the necessity of opposing your wishes. It is unnecessary for me to remind your lordship, that the affair on which you proffered me your permission to deliberate, and on which I have endeavoured to exercise my best judgment, is one in which I am so deeply concerned, that I had almost said, it is exclusively my own. And while I desire only to live under your roof, and to devote myself to the precious duties of your companion and nurse, surely you will not force me from you, or withhold that approbation, without which I should live but to be wretched.'

'Helen,' said my uncle, somewhat softened, 'you have certainly a woman's tongue in great perfection; but it would please me better if it were associated with a woman's sense. There are few of your sex, situated as you are, who would be idiots enough to refuse such an offer as Mr. Fitzgerald's; nor can I persuade myself you can be sincere in the absurd communication you have this morning made me, of what you are pleased to call your decision. Am I to believe that you have determined on being a beggar? that you have calculated the distance between the palace and the hovel—and that you think it an easy step from the one to the other? Or am I to consider the part you are playing as a trial at diplomacy? Do you think to enhance the value of your compliance by the reluctance with which you accompany it? If this be your object, spare yourself the trouble of pursuing it any further, with me at least, and reserve your experiments for Fitzgerald, who will doubtless be able to institute a counter-game, quite as subtle and quite as amusing.'

All this was uttered in a tone of such bitter irony, that I burst into tears. My uncle was more moved by my tears than by anything I had said, and, resuming his usual kindness of manner, said, 'I see, my love, that you are sorry for what you have written, and will consent to my throwing your note into the



fire, and to meeting Fitzgerald to-day at dinner. Remember, child, that your opposition will be of no use to you; although, certainly, I would rather you should be convinced that your compliance is but required to what is necessary to secure your own happiness.'

I perceived, notwithstanding the milder language and tone of my uncle, that I had approached the extremity of his forbearance, and that a single word might exceed its bound. Yet it appeared indispensable that I should make one effort more, in firmness of spirit, to convince him that vacillation of mind had not been the cause of my tears.

'My lord,' said I, 'I am aware of the duty I owe you as my uncle, and still more as my benefactor, and the representative of a beloved parent, whom I shall never see again on earth. My heart is deeply sensible of the ten thousand kindnesses I have received at your hands, since the day I came under your roof. I am aware, also, that I can never repay them. But I have given you—all I have to give—the reverence and the affection of my heart. I am happy in living near you, and I want, now, no other happiness, except that of seeing my mother and sisters, through your bounty and goodness, as happy as I am myself. If I have understood you aright, you have urged my acceptance of Mr. Fitzgerald, in apprehension of my being at some future time reduced below my present situation; you will permit me to say—and attribute it not to a want of delicacy that I presume to speak at all on such a subject—I shall be quite satisfied with whatever portion of your property you may be pleased to bestow on me; and that I shall be content, whenever necessary, to contract my wants, so as neither to become destitute nor embarrassed, how limited soever my future fortune may be. Will not this assurance, my dear uncle, remove from your mind the kind and too anxious concern you entertain respecting my future lot? And will you not kindly, and for ever, discard the subject of Mr. Fitzgerald?'

'Folly! madness!' exclaimed my uncle, as he turned on me a countenance distorted by anger. 'Do you suppose, Miss Mulgrave, that I will suffer a young lady whom I have introduced to the world as my niece and heiress, to sink down into the

obscurity you propose, and, when I am no more, blast my name by the meanness of her condition, and rob my memory and my ashes of the respect due to them? No! My resolution is taken. You shall marry Fitzgerald, or I will disinherit and banish you at once from my protection; that, no longer identified with me, you may not bring on me the disgrace which must arise from your grovelling ideas of life and happiness! I want no reply: I will hear none. Fitzgerald dines here to-day. See that you are properly dressed, and in time in the drawing-room.'

Surprised and frightened, by this most sudden and violent burst of passion, I remained for several minutes riveted to the spot on which I stood, doubtful if I were really in my senses. Was it possible that, from my uncle—my pious and learned uncle—I had heard such an avowal of worldly feeling and personal pride?

My whole soul revolted against the despotism of his treatment, and my self-love was in every way deeply wounded by it.

Henceforth, I was to consider myself as only the plaything of his ambition—a mere shuttlecock, crested with the borrowed plumes of his dignity, and destined to be driven to and fro, in any direction that might be pleasing to him or to Mr. Fitzgerald. My heart swelled with indignation at the thought; for the lesson of humility I had received had not humbled me. I felt that the moment of fate had arrived, when perhaps my dear father's injunction was no longer binding. I must at once, said I, acquaint both my uncle and Mr. Fitzgerald that I am a Protestant. Who knows but that such a revelation might induce the latter to relinquish me? Upon second thoughts, this purpose was abandoned, as the desecration of a sacred instrument to a worldly purpose. No—I will not make such an avowal, until I can make it in a spirit of meekness and right feeling. But surely I may inform my uncle that my whole heart is devoted to Monsieur de Grammont? Impossible that, knowing this, he would compel me to utter the solemn vows of marriage to another? I must speak now, or be for ever lost. Yet how shall I make such a disclosure to so severe and prejudiced an adversary of Monsieur de Grammont? Fears of a *convent*, however,

or of its hated alternative, caused a rebound of feeling that braced my nerves.

While these thoughts had successively passed with lightning speed through my mind, I was proceeding from the study through the library to my own apartments. I suddenly turned, and re-entered the study. My uncle, who was pacing it in hasty strides, stood still as I entered, and fixed on me a stare of surprise. Then moving towards the mantel-piece, leant against it with folded arms, and a look of disdain at once cool and petrifying. I felt that I must speak quickly, or retire. I therefore said, 'My lord, if you will give me a moment's further hearing, I beg to say that I think it my duty to confide to you what, perhaps, it had been better you had known before.'

My uncle, with apparently quickened attention, continued to gaze on me with haughty indifference, but still without a word, and I stammeringly proceeded. 'I believe, my lord, indeed, I think I am sure, that the Marquis de Grammont, though twice rejected'—— I could get no further for several seconds, when I again commenced——'I was endeavouring, my lord, to mention to you that Monsieur de Grammont, notwithstanding his rejection, considers me as engaged to him, and I therefore could not accept the hand of any other gentleman in marriage, without his permission.'

A loud peal of mocking laughter was the response to this most painful disclosure; while I stood before him with my face covered with my hands, and my heart swelling with mortification. When the peal ended, he said, 'Have you anything more to tell me, Miss Mulgrave? You are perhaps married to the marquis?'

'No, my lord, I am not married to him, but I am bound in honour not to marry another. For I have accepted him, and we are mutually bound to each other.'

As I paused, quite out of breath, and frightened at my own rashness, my uncle approached me, and seizing my arm with a rude grasp, said——'Are you mad, or wicked, Miss Mulgrave? Is it my brother's child, my own adopted, who thus speaks to me of what the modesty of her sex and age should have found too sacred for utterance? Do you mean to propose yourself in

person to the Marquis de Grammont? or do you wish me to write to him, and say that you are at his service? You would, it seems, marry a Protestant—perhaps, become one yourself—place yourself out of the pale of salvation—*sell* yourself to Satan—spurn everlasting life—and all for a renegade, as apostate in love as in faith; to whom you would as vainly recal his crude fancy for yourself, as the former devotion of his family to our holy church. But I will put a speedy end to all this; you are already the betrothed of Fitzgerald, the marriage articles are signed, and only your own insignificant signature, which a proxy may supply, is wanting to make them complete; for the great head of the church sanctions the union, and your resistance will be in vain. Go, therefore, set your thoughts and feelings in order, and meet as you ought your future husband, at the appointed dinner-hour.’

My uncle had been, no doubt unconsciously, grasping my arm with crushing violence during his whole harangue; and the pain he occasioned was so acute as to diminish the power of his menaces, by dividing their terror with the physical suffering he inflicted; as he tossed my arm from him, I did not wait to be again commanded from his presence, but with quick step quitted his study, and gained my own apartments. Taking a hasty retrospect of the disclosures just made me, I became almost frantic with resentment and terror. As resentment cooled, torpor and a sense of impotence succeeded, that caused me to throw myself on the floor in utter despair.

Not that I believed aught of the injurious taunts respecting Monsieur de Grammont, but that I could not disbelieve my uncle’s determination to do all that he had threatened, in the disposal of myself. Wearied with reflection, in which I meditated more than once to escape from my uncle, and throw myself on the chances of the highway and the channel, which led to England and my uncle’s house there, I sprang from the floor, and began to make the circuit of my rooms. But I had there neither companion nor adviser, and the perils of an orphanage so desolate assailed me for the first time in all their terrors. I ran from room to room, to escape from the loneliness that surrounded me, under an isolation of feeling scarcely endurable.



If my uncle should persist in carrying his purpose into execution only one means of escape from the detested marriage vow remained to me; and I resolved on resisting, even at the altar, every effort to compel me to pronounce it. As I gazed distractedly around me, my eye fell on a newspaper lying on one of the tables; which, as I had not seen it before, must have been brought there during my absence. I took it idly up, and found it to be a Dublin paper of recent date; but feeling unable to read, I was throwing it down again, when the heading of one of its columns bearing the name of De Grammont fastened on my sight, and called back my wandering senses in an instant. It announced a wedding in high life in Paris, which ran as follows, —‘Married, on the 19th ult., in Paris, at the Chapel of the British Embassy, Léonce Louis Fredric, Marquis de Grammont, to——’ I saw no more! Léonce was married, no matter to whom. I stood with the paper in my hand, like one petrified. It was a calamity too great for me to realize. No tears came to my aid, no tender regrets, but a shivering, sinking of heart, and a feeling of being rent into a thousand pieces.

I had now lost all motive for flight, or for making any further effort to save myself. I cared no more for life in any form, the brevity of it alone was consolatory, and who could tell but mine might be near its close.

If Léonce was happy—and, of course, he was—I would endeavour to rejoice in it, and none should know how much this effort cost me.

I had not long time for rumination. Long before the customary hour for dressing, Mary came into my room, with a message from my uncle, that Mr. Fitzgerald and he would dispense with my company at dinner that day, and recommending me to order the chariot, and take a drive.

As I was accustomed to obey every ordinary suggestion of this sort from him, and cared not, at that moment, what I did or where I went, Mary and I were soon driving rapidly on the road leading to Mulgrave Castle.

The retrospection awakened by this locality softened my feelings, and brought relief to my whole frame, in a flood of tears. When I became calm, I inquired of Mary if she knew anything

of the newspaper that lay on my table. She said it was brought there by my uncle's valet, in my absence. The sickening intelligence, then, was known to my uncle, and placed before me by his orders. Perhaps it was this knowledge which induced him to laugh, and scoff so unmercifully, at the confidence I had so simply expressed in Monsieur de Grammont's constancy?

There are epochs in life which transform character almost in a single hour. I felt during my ride that my whole nature was changed, as it regarded all things in this world; and that henceforth I should but fight my way through life, as the soldier through the ranks of his adversary on the field of battle.

Happy for me if I should also be enabled to fight that battle which wins everlasting life! I threw myself back in the carriage, and, lifting up my agonized, yet still proud heart to God, found no acceptance with Him; for, although they who mourn are promised comfort, it is only to the humble in spirit that celestial consolations are imparted. But the sense of wrong that filled my soul was so bitter, that the humility of sincere devotion was far from me.

As the carriage stopped on our return, at my uncle's door, Mr. Fitzgerald presented himself to hand me out. I found this too much for me; and, lingering as long as I could in the carriage, sobbed from vexation and a sense of insult. He no doubt had seen the Dublin paper, and was acting entirely under my uncle's orders. I sprang forward, as he waited my pleasure at the carriage-door, and flew by him, through my uncle's house to my own.

When I sat down to reflect on this discourtesy, I could hardly believe that I had been guilty of it; but it was well done if it exempted me from further advances on the part of Fitzgerald.

As I thus thought, a gentle rap at my door startled me, and I was moving forward to open it, thinking it might be a conciliatory visit from my uncle, when it was opened from without, and Mr. Fitzgerald walked in, with an air somewhat less confident than usual, but still with the complacency of an acknowledged friend, sure of a welcome.

He left me not a moment for embarrassment, but approaching me with an extended hand, begged to lead me to a seat. I could

not again run away. This childish game must end. I was therefore led unresistingly to a chair in a distant part of the room. Then, pretending it must be the wrong one, he marched me to another, and another, until I was ready to laugh and cry in a breath—and, snatching my hand away, I threw myself into the seat which stood nearest to me.

‘We are happy, my dear Miss Mulgrave,’ said he, with imperturbable gravity, ‘to have got over a serious difficulty so promptly.’ And, dropping himself into a chair next to mine, continued, ‘I hope you like the seat you have chosen?’

I turned my head to him with a repelling thought bursting for utterance, but, suppressing it, looked another way, and moved to a window. He followed me, and seeing there was no escape, I gathered up as much forbearance as I could muster, and sat quietly down in a lounging chair. He now stood before me, and assuming a look of solemnity foreign to his nature, and which, therefore, looked like mockery, said, ‘I have had permission from the bishop to invite myself to dine with you to-day, my dear Miss Mulgrave, if you do not forbid me.’

‘I thought you were engaged to dine with my uncle? I am not in any way prepared for the honour of your company at my table, nor have I ever been accustomed to receive guests in my private apartments.’

‘But under so high a sanction,—almost under the bishop’s command,—you can have no objection, I hope, for once, to deviate from the rigid rule you have hitherto prescribed to yourself; especially—if I may be permitted to mention it,—the relation in which I hope so shortly to stand to you, should obtain for me at least an hour’s private converse.’

‘An *hour’s* talk? Oh, pray say what you have to say at once. I will emulate your frankness, and we shall understand each other in five minutes.’

‘Frankly, then,’—and he dropped on one knee as he spoke—‘I am here to express my homage, and to offer you my hand, and a devoted heart. Will you not deign to accept the offering?’

‘No, sir.’

‘You will not? You are cruel, Miss Mulgrave,’ said he, smiling with an amused air.

Then rising, he drew a chair close beside me, and attempted to take my hand, but did not succeed.

‘Mr. Fitzgerald,’ said I, coldly, ‘be not offended at what it is necessary for me to say to you. I have no heart to present you in exchange for yours, and I therefore beg to decline your offer, now and for ever.’

‘Are you so insensible? Am I so hateful to you? Oh, Helen! if, like your namesake, a ten year’s siege may win you, you will yet be mine. Are you prepared for so long a warfare? But I am sure you will relent. It cannot be, that so fair a form was created without a heart. What can you have done with it? Only tell me whither it has wandered, and I will fly to the most distant regions of the earth to fetch it back, in the hope of receiving it as my reward, with this fair hand, on my return,’ raising my hand at the same instant abruptly to his lips.

I burst into tears at this freedom, feeling that he was indeed making a plaything of me at my uncle’s prompting.

He rose at sight of my tears, and said he had not courage to behold them, nor could he ever forgive himself for causing them.

‘How may I obliterate the offence I have given you?’ said he.

‘By leaving me,’ said I.

‘That is a cruel penance, but if you will say that it shall obtain my pardon, and give me but a hope of being permitted to wait on you to-morrow, I will relieve you instantly of my hated presence, and eat my morsel of bread with bitter herbs below with the bishop, instead of feasting with you on the nectar and ambrosia of Olympus;’ and again seizing my hand, and pressing it to his lips, he flew out of the room.

I had observed more than once, while he was with me, a sort of excitement in look and manner, which suggested the idea of insanity or inebriety. Could it be possible that he was under the influence of either the one or the other? While I was thus questioning with myself, a tap at the door announced his return, and he was the next instant again in the room, shutting the door after him, which when he had done, he came up to me, and dropped on one knee before me, with a look of irony and extravagant merriment that alarmed me. I did not wait an explanation, but darting past him, was out of the room in a



moment. I locked myself into my chamber, which was too distant for me to hear his movements, and remained there until Mary announced my dinner. I inquired if any one was in the dining-room; and as she said only the footman, I descended, and took my meal without disturbance.

The way in which Mr. Fitzgerald had compelled me to treat him was far from satisfactory to myself, yet I could not suggest any more effectual mode of quietly accomplishing an *affront* which might possibly relieve me from any further importunity on his part. As to my uncle, I dared not think of him; but there was an effort yet to be made to deliver myself from his persecutions, which could not be deferred, and I wrote him the following note:—

My dear Uncle,

‘You told me this morning that I was betrothed to Mr. Fitzgerald, and that the marriage articles were signed by all parties except myself. You remarked that my signature might be made by proxy. Of course, that could be only a jest, or an hyperbole of speech. I take it for granted, then, that my signature, in my own hand, is essential to such a contract. That being the case, I write—with all duteousness of feeling, whatever may be thought to the contrary—to say that nothing can induce me to sign the marriage articles in question, nor can I allow myself to utter false vows before the altar. Having after much reflection, arrived at this decision, I hope you will not again permit Mr. Fitzgerald to be put to the useless trouble of making professions of attachment to me, to which my heart cannot respond.

‘I pray you to pardon the terms in which I have framed this note, as it seemed to me due to all parties that I should be perfectly explicit. Deign to believe me still, my dear uncle, hoping for your indulgence, your most grateful niece,

‘H. M.’

My protest thus made, Mr. Fitzgerald and his eccentricity were soon obliterated, except the conviction which grew stronger on retrospection, that he was certainly in a state of partial inebria-

tion, when he so ridiculously intruded himself on me. The great event of the day was, and would continue to be, an irreparable calamity, which must be borne in silence as best it might. It was one of those sorrows which cannot be participated, and which admits of no alleviation but in that resignation to the Divine will, attainable only after long suffering.

On the following morning, after breakfast, I sent my note of the last evening to my uncle, and learnt of the messenger who carried it that Mr. Fitzgerald was with him. The two gentlemen were then in council, and I endeavoured to think that I might bid defiance to fate, for that I could scarcely be placed, by any machinations, in a much worse position than I already was, even if the determination to force me into the marriage should be prosecuted with the energy of will peculiar to my uncle. I hoped that Mr. Fitzgerald, as he would unavoidably see my note, might, either from generosity or resentment, terminate the negotiation.

But I was not long permitted to meditate on present or distant evil. An event was at hand which subdued all my fortitude, and made me an unresisting victim of the fate that awaited me. Scarcely an hour had elapsed after the departure of my note, before I was called to my uncle's study, to behold him under the influence of an apoplectic seizure, which threatened his life. Mr. Fitzgerald was with him, and on seeing me enter, approached me with an alarmed expression of countenance, and said—'Alas, Miss Mulgrave, I fear your note has killed your uncle.'

As he observed the shock he had inflicted, he added, in a deprecating tone—'Do not take me literally. The bishop's malady is constitutional; and, most likely, could not have been averted.'

I reflected on this remark afterwards, as indicative of good-nature, at least.

The valets, under the direction of two medical men, were removing my uncle to his bed-room. He appeared quite insensible, and was an affecting spectacle of impotence, sufficient to move any beholder. He had formerly recovered from a similar attack, but it was far less serious than this. As for me, fearing that by my note I had been the cause of it, I followed the

attendants to the bed-room door, in speechless, unutterable agony. Never until now had I known remorse—that feeling which fastens on the heart like ‘the worm that never dieth.’ What was the deepest or the tenderest grief compared with this? It was but as the cry or tear of infancy. Until we know guilt—until we are placed in affinity with crime, we can never be said to have drunk the cup of human misery to the dregs. What was even the wretchedness of a marriage with Fitzgerald, compared with the guilt of having destroyed a human life? All my estimates of right and wrong seemed at once changed. That which only a few hours ago had appeared to me but a duty to myself—but a simple effort of self-preservation—now assumed the character of rebellion against paternal authority, and the coercive benevolence of a father. These distracting reflections disturbed my reason, as I sat in a distant corner of my uncle’s chamber, watching the slow processes of remedial treatment.

For some time my uncle had been getting worse, and a temporary suspension of experiments had left him alone in bed, while the doctors retired for further consultation to an adjoining room. My uncle’s personal servant sat outside the door of his chamber.

A solemn quiet pervaded it. Overpowered by what I beheld, and fearing that all hope had been abandoned, I crept softly to the bedside of my uncle, in a state little short of aberration, and kneeling down beside him, took one of his cold, unconscious hands, and vowed solemnly on it, in an emphatic whisper, that if it might please God to restore him, and bring him back again to consciousness, I would comply with all his requirements, to the very letter, and marry whom he pleased. Having said this, I finished solemnly with the words—‘So help me God!’ and kissed my uncle’s hand.

Fitzgerald, who was sitting quite out of sight, behind one of the bed-curtains, suddenly, but silently, came forward, and kneeling down by my side, took my uncle’s hand out of mine, and in a distinct whisper said—‘I also vow, on this hand, to perform every wish of its venerable owner, and marry whom he may direct.’

This most unforeseen incident might have been a severe trial

to the sincerity of my vow; but my heart was so emptied of every feeling, except the desire of my uncle's restoration to life, that the occurrence scarcely moved me. Neither did I hasten to rise from the posture in which my vow had been made, but burying my face in the bed clothes, addressed myself to silent prayer. I know not how long I remained thus. My heart at last felt relieved of part of its load, and the dying hand I was holding in mine had become warm. All at once I felt one of its fingers twitch. The movement acted on me like an electric shock. I sprang up, and beckoning the doctors to approach, whispered what had occurred. They made no reply, but beginning to examine the person of the patient, I retreated to my own rooms. In a few hours I was apprized, by a message from them, that the circulation was returning gradually over the whole frame, and that there was hope of even more decisive symptoms of improvement in a short time.

My thankfulness on receipt of this message, and my joy when, two hours after, a return to consciousness was announced, was as unbounded as my distress had been. No criminal in a court of justice, unexpectedly hearing from a jury the sentence of 'not guilty,' was ever relieved of a heavier load.

The wrong we do ourselves, however, has its own peculiar guilt and consequences; and is seldom expiated, but in that crucible which, while it purifies, destroys.

In the course of a week, my uncle had regained his customary health. I had seen very little of Fitzgerald since the scene in the sick chamber; but a former impression of his good nature had been confirmed by several incidents in the progress of my uncle's convalescence. Yet my repugnance to marrying him was scarcely less than it had been originally.

I soon, however, became sensible that I had forged fetters for myself, which would be rivetted with a rigour and promptitude exceeding my worst fears. My uncle was, indeed, in high good humour; and he endeavoured to expedite the marriage, with an urgency that must have been revolting to both parties. Whenever I was more than usually sad, he would exhort me to 'cheer up, for the happy day would soon arrive.'

On one occasion, when he was lacerating me with such antici



pations, I could not restrain my tears, and remarked to him, that although my vow on his account, having been made to God, must, if he held me to it, be fulfilled, it was yet in *his* power to save me from the consequences of the rashness of which I had been guilty, and which I had committed only under the influence of irrepressible terror at the thought of losing him. It was in vain I thus disclosed to him the state of my feelings. I appealed to his compassion, to his generosity, to the paternal relation in which he stood to me. My uncle was inexorable in demanding 'the bond!' Had the 'pound of flesh' been included in it, he would doubtless have been equally inflexible, and thus exhibited the type of a new Shylock in sacerdotal cloth. One expedient yet remained. I had never appealed to Mr. Fitzgerald himself on a *religious* ground, but I now thought it possible that I might obtain from him a resignation of me on this account. I therefore took an opportunity of stating to him that both in opinion and feeling, I was what he must consider a heretic. And placing before him, not only the inconveniences, but the mutual bitternesses, that must arise from discordancy on so material a point as that of religion, I begged him to consider before it was too late, the fact of which I had informed him, in which I had no doubt he would find sufficient reason for resigning me, or for deferring indefinitely the contemplated solemn engagement.

As I ceased speaking, he burst into a hearty laugh, exclaiming, 'Really, my dear Miss Mulgrave, as it is the first time you have ever condescended to ask a favour of me, I am immensely miserable at not being able to grant your request. But much as you fancy you would oblige yourself by jilting me, I am not sure you could live without me; and the sacrifice you demand, would certainly plunge *me* into a premature grave; and you would then, most assuredly, be offering up your own dear little life to restore mine. Besides, I have not the smallest objection to your *Huguenotism*. You may make a conventicle of Beech Park, and have your own chaplain resident in it (provided he is a venerable man), so that you will allow me a quiet scat in some chimney corner there, whence I may peep at you, and hear the music of your voice occasionally. Pray withdraw your motion, or positively I must betray your confidence, and tell the bishop

of it; for I am sure he has no notion of so serious a peccadillo in one whom he deems perfect in every accomplishment except common sense. He sadly deplores your want of that; and since it makes you blind to my merits, I ought to deplore it too, if I could convince myself that you really lacked it. But I do myself the justice to believe that this want of common sense would never have caused the smallest objection to me, if I had not been forced on you by authority. You will forget that, before we have been married a year, and will then dote on me, as all the rest of your sex do. Pray don't look so grave—surely, truth cannot be distasteful to you, and I repeat, that the women everywhere worship me!

During this extraordinary effusion, I regarded his countenance with attention, and discerned the same symptoms I had observed more than once before. I could not be mistaken. It was, alas! an artificial exhilaration, almost amounting to inebriety. Must I close my eyes to such a trait as this in the character of the man destined to be my husband? Oh, how my heart sickened at the thought!

It was impossible for two persons to be more unsuitable to each other than Mr. Fitzgerald and myself. I made the remark to him more than once, in the hope of inducing him to reflect on the fact. But he held fast to his purpose, as though his life or his fortune would be staked by its abandonment; treating me as a child that might be amused or conciliated by petting and adulation. With what motives my uncle plied him, I know not. The natural inconstancy of his tastes and pursuits would have been sufficient, under ordinary influences, to have worn out his *penchant* for me in a far shorter time than the six weeks he had already devoted to it. But my uncle, as a third party, who had gratuitously charged himself with my destiny, was the more inexplicable person of the two. I could not but suppose him solicitous for my welfare and happiness; yet whence his utter disregard of my own inclinations? His error seemed to lie in the ideas that marriage was essential to happiness, and wealth and station essential to marriage. Fatal errors! sweeping through the land, and every day making victims of the inexperienced and the thoughtless in all ranks of life.

My dear father had been dead but four months, and my brother a still shorter time; but the wedding day, which had been fixed without consulting me, obliged me to exchange deep mourning for bridal attire. What of this? No outrage of feeling could be worth a thought, compared with that of extorting marriage vows from an unattached and repugnant heart. 'At least, dear uncle,' said I, 'permit me, for the sake of the dead, to retain a slight mourning, and let the ceremony be private.'

'I will have no private doings,' said he. 'I am marrying you to a man whom all his county and connexions delight to honour; and my niece shall neither disgrace me nor herself by her caprice or her sentimentality on this occasion.'

At length the dreaded morning came. When I found myself a conspicuous object amongst the gay and smiling guests of my uncle's drawing-rooms, it was with difficulty I retained my senses. I neither recognised faces nor remembered names, and I heard not the compliments addressed to me. I was an automaton, whose machinery was deranged; or a galvanised corpse, with eyes that saw not, and ears that heard not. Yet, in spite of this incapacity, I was invested with a part in the drama of the hour, that bound me for life to a man with whom I had as yet never been able to reciprocate a feeling, or exchange a thought.

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#### CHAPTER XIV.

I WAS able, in reflecting on my uncle's conduct, after the distress and agitation of the wedding had passed away, to make many excuses for his coercive and cruel treatment of me, when I considered the distracted state of his mind on pecuniary accounts, arising out of the large debt which my father had contracted to him, by whose early and sudden death all possibility of future liquidation was precluded. From the day that I was married, I entered on a career of suffering which I would fain believe is not frequent in married life. But I became a dutiful wife, so far as the duties of the character may be performed

under the circumstances of an union like mine. To satisfy my own mind in this respect, was, indeed, at first, the only object left me in life. But when I found that my husband had really been in earnest in offering me, before marriage, liberty of conscience, and that when I proposed to avail myself of this offer, he consistently acquiesced in it, I had a new and animating motive, which made duty grateful, as well as exact.

My uncle lived but a few months after the accomplishment of his object; and, irritated to the highest degree by my husband's acquiescence in my secession from the Romish church, which I formally accomplished at this time, he never would see us more. This indulgence on the part of my husband, whether from utter indifference to religion, or a desire to conciliate me, was fraught with blessings to me.

My husband was an only child—impetuous and self-willed, undisciplined and lawless. In seeking me for a wife, he must have been influenced by public taste, and the ambition of marrying the daughter of a man so universally popular and beloved as my father. He required neither intellect nor principle, and would no doubt have been better satisfied had he found me without either. But there can be no excuse for a woman of principle, if she do not make an infinitely better wife, as well as a more indulgent one, than a woman of negative qualities.

We never had any domestic feuds, but my husband's impetuosity at first intimidated, and afterwards revolted me. His wild caprices and irregular habits precluded any system in our mode of life; and while he professed a passionate attachment to me, he seemed often to forget that I was in existence. Nevertheless, had I been simply indifferent to him, had I not been coerced into marriage with him, that gratitude for attachment which is so natural to the female heart, might possibly have obtained for him some return of affection. Clear-sighted to my husband's faults and vices, I became hopeless of his reform. Perhaps he discerned this hopelessness, and abandoned himself to his evil courses. Nevertheless, it was neither neglect of duty, nor the omission of conciliation, on my part, that rendered us unhappy; but it was that *vice and misery are in their very nature inseparable*. And how blind soever a wife may wish to be, or



may fancy it her duty to be, to vices for which she is not responsible, there are kinds and amounts of *wrong* with which she can make no compromise but at the peril of everything that is sacred in feeling and in conscience. Nor had I been formed, either by precept or example, for that temporizing morality required in the wife of a man devoted to self-gratification, and regardless of all claims but those of inclination. My husband was naturally fond of convivial pleasures, and, from the earliest period of our marriage, surrounded himself with congenial companions.

He was also fond of music, and, possessing an exquisite voice, as well as science and taste, his popularity in such society was unbounded.

This popularity increased, and perpetuated the illusions of his mind, fostering his errors until they became inveterate and incurable. The solitariness of our mansion did not insure retirement, for whenever Fitzgerald was at home, it was filled with visitors, so that we were scarcely ever left a single day alone in the society of each other.

Fond of the sports of the field, my husband was frequently absent for weeks together; and whilst, in the acquirement of essential knowledge, I endeavoured to find a remedy against loneliness of heart, I but widened, by the exercise of my faculties, the distance betwixt him and myself.

Conviviality naturally led to inebriety, and he was sometimes brought home by his servants from an entertainment, at four or five in the morning, in a condition degrading to human nature. In his two latter years this became a frequent and almost a perpetual occurrence.

We lived on for some time in a course of this sort, interrupted only by those occasional indispositions which the excesses of the table produced, and which kept him a short time at home a patient of mine.

On these occasions it frequently happened that a transient gleam of goodness would break out in his character, and a temporary relish of home produce almost a transforming effect on his manners.

But that consciousness of error which never leads to reforma-

tion, debases the mind, and even gives an impetus to its downward course.

My husband had no sooner recovered his strength and spirits, than he again left home in quest of new excitements.

Meantime, a derangement in his pecuniary affairs occurred, and the customary advances for the current expenses of the house became deeply in arrear.

I had learnt, from the misfortunes of my dear father, the perilousness of long-standing accounts, and had therefore from the first, on assuming my domestic duties at Beech Park, been rigid in requiring of my housekeeper punctually to settle all her accounts every three months. I had never been restricted in my domestic expenditure, except by my own discretion, and now, becoming apprehensive that we might be living on too great a scale of expense for my husband's revenues, I one day proposed to him, with great deference, that I might be allowed to make some retrenchments.

He impatiently replied that there was no occasion for so paltry an expedient, and expressed his displeasure at my supposing that the arrears in the customary advances were anything more than a temporary irregularity. It nevertheless continued until I was driven to the greatest imaginable straits for the smallest amounts of cash.

My housekeeper beseechingly offered me loans, for it was impossible to conceal from her that I was without funds; but of course I never allowed myself to accept her assistance; and we continued to live for some time on that unbounded credit which my husband's known wealth and our former habits of punctual and periodical payments had obtained for us, both in town and country.

Nevertheless, the day of reckoning came at last. Fitzgerald's health grew worse and worse; but this did not wean him from his excesses, and he continued to accumulate debts of honour at the gaming-table, until a ruined reputation caused his expulsion from the circles in which he had hitherto moved, and forced him on the resources of home for society.

I saw at once that he was in a state of alarming decline, both in health and spirits. It was evidently as much too late to

repair his health, as it evidently proved to be to retrieve his social position and character.

All I could do for him was to nurse him with incessant care. He awoke to the charm of domestic affections, when he had no longer strength to endure the interesting society and caresses of his children; and very soon became so ill as to be confined, by the doctor's orders, to his bed.

There were some two or three Romish priests, one of whom was a distinguished Jesuit, living in the vicinity of Beech Park, who at this juncture first began to come about the house, with pretexts of various kinds for obtaining access to the sick man's chamber. I was in great anxiety respecting his religious state, and not knowing what might be passing in his mind, I thought it right to apprise him of the urgency of the priests to obtain an interview with him.

But Fitzgerald had always held the priesthood of his church in abhorrence, and had never, since the time of our marriage, complied with any religious requirements.

No confessions—no penances—and I may add, no prayers; for, revolted as he declared himself to be by what he deemed the hypocrisy of his church, he would have no communion with it, although he made no effort openly to renounce its doctrines or contend with its practices.

One day, as he lay on his sick bed, he deplored, in strong and affecting language, the dubious position in which he stood with a power so formidable as that of a Popish priest armed with the authority of his church.

I inquired why he did not emancipate himself from bonds which were so oppressive and so abhorrent to him.

'You know not,' he replied, 'what you advise. A real emancipation is impossible, where the powers of that church are protected by law. Its *spiritual* powers, as they are called—only to blind those who discern not their true character—are neither more nor less than a secular and social despotism, which, in concert with that serpent-like influence which the priests assume and obtain over the minds of all who lend to them a listening ear, becomes a leviathan with which it is impossible to contend, without becoming its victim.'

‘What is life—what is property—in the hands of the priest? They dissolve under his very touch, and pass away, none knowing how or whither. I lie here, bereft of all my illusions, and like Don Quixotte, I expire with them. The priests! Oh, had I but health, or even the strength of a child, I might protect you and my children from their grasp; for be assured you will fall into it. I see you, both in my waking and my sleeping dreams, led away to the niche in the wall, or to the private cell of the Inquisition, where the stake is always fixed, and awaiting its victims!’

I fancied that he was slightly delirious, as he often was, but he continued—‘Oh, my pure and angelic wife! my beautiful children! is it I who have sold you to the destroyer?’

These expressions suggested the idea of his having already been drawn into some engagement with the priests; but I was far from suspecting that he had been irrevocably tampered with by them; although, as yet, not any of them had been admitted to an interview with him, so far as I knew. But this was not necessary to the attainment of their objects, since any one of the medical attendants belonging to the *holy church* was ready to do their bidding, and perform for the priest, by proxy, what he could not perform in person, till the dupe was moulded to his purpose. As for myself, I was but an *outlaw* in their estimation, who might be dealt with as best suited their policy.

As Fitzgerald sank into silence, I seated myself by his bedside, and spoke to him quietly of that invisible future from which none of us could escape, whether prepared for it or not; and begged him if there was any desire in his heart to consult a spiritual adviser, that he would allow me to call in some clerical man of exemplary piety, to whom he might unbosom himself.

After listening attentively to my remarks for at least a minute or two, he earnestly fixed his eyes on me, saying: ‘Helen, you really think the soul valuable, do you? How much do you suppose it to be worth?’

‘Oh! more than a world. No earthly good can be put in competition with it.

‘Suppose then,’ he replied, ‘it were necessary, in order to buy my soul out of purgatory, to bestow my estates, and all I



have in the world, on the church, regardless of any provision for my children or yourself—would you consent to such a sacrifice? Is my soul of sufficient value in your eyes to enable you to acquiesce in the requirements of the church?’

‘If,’ I replied, ‘the price you propose could indeed purchase the salvation of your soul, it would be my most sacred duty to suffer cheerfully the loss of every earthly possession, for such an object, not counting the cost to myself or our children. But the soul is not redeemed with ‘corruptible things, such as silver and gold.’ All the wealth of the world would be inadequate to the purchase. The precious blood of Christ has been already shed for the redemption of it, and there is now ‘no more sacrifice for sin.’ What is required of us is, to repent and believe; and without this, even the divine atonement will have been made in vain for us.’

‘You are an excellent casuist, Helen,’ said Fitzgerald. ‘You ought to have been a priest yourself. But do not attempt to speak again to me on the awful subject you have chosen for a theme. Hush! There are footsteps. Oh, how quickened is my hearing to the tread of a priest!’

I started as the door opened, to see, indeed, a priest enter. My doomed husband became frantic at sight of him, and after successive execrations and screams, fainted.

The Jesuit measured me with his eye, as my husband lay before me in a state of insensibility, from which I vainly endeavoured to recover him. It was a relief to me to see the doctors enter at this moment.

I remained until Fitzgerald returned to consciousness, and was then requested by him, in a whisper, to withdraw.

I was greatly surprised at what I had witnessed, and still more at my husband’s request; but entreating him to be calm, I quitted the room, with an apprehensiveness which I had never before felt on leaving him. The sudden appearance of the priest in the sick chamber, and his extraordinary reception there, I could in no way understand.

Inquiring of my servants how the Jesuit gained admittance, I was informed that he had asked for Mr. Fitzgerald, and desired the servant to conduct him to his presence, with an air of con-

fidence which induced him to suppose that he had come by appointment, and in this way made good his entrance, the doctors shortly following him.

Having received this information, I returned to the anti-chamber of the sick room, hovering about the locked door of it, without being able to enter, for nearly an hour. Distrusting the object of the priest, whose presence, at any rate, I knew to be offensive to the suffering patient, I one moment felt disposed to assemble my servants, and make my way into his room by force; but the recollection that he himself had requested me to retire from it, checked my purpose, and compelled me to restrain my indignation.

Every time I attempted to enter, I was prevented from doing so by one of the doctors coming to the door, and telling me that the patient was engaged with his confessor.

For a short time I heard only an occasional murmur of voices, but suddenly Fitzgerald's tones became so loud as to rise to the height of violent anger or delirium.

My knocks at the door were now unnoticed. At length a loud scream reached me, followed by a violent ringing of the bell. The valet appeared instantly and passed, by the priest's order, at once into the room. The door of it had now been thrown open by the Jesuit priest, and he stood in the gap, to prevent my entrance, with a *serious placid* face.

'Madam,' said he, in a gentle, touching voice; 'the duties of the confessional are painful, both to the confessor and the confessed. But I trust that I have been able to pour balm into the diseased mind, and to enlighten the dark "valley of the shadow of death," to the traveller destined so soon to pass through it.'

Unable to listen any longer to him, I motioned him aside, by an impatient gesture, and rushed past him to the bedside of my husband, to behold him extended lifeless in a pool of blood.

Horried at the sight, I involuntarily screamed, and unable to speak, pointed to the corpse that lay before me, and turning to one of the doctors with a look of inquiry, he replied to me by saying—'The excitement of the patient's feelings, when in confession, was so great as to cause the rupture of a material blood-vessel in the chest. You see the sad consequences. But we

have examined him, and find that there still is life, and we trust that he may be recovered to consciousness. Meanwhile, allow me to entreat you, madam, to spare yourself the pain of beholding him in his present state. We have rung for the nurse, who will doubtless be here in an instant, when remedial measures will be tried for his recovery; and you will, I trust, if you will leave him to our care, shortly see him restored to you.'

I did not, however, leave the room, for suspicions of a terrific character had taken possession of me. The Jesuit disappeared while I was speaking to the doctors, under the influence, as they afterwards told me, of sudden indisposition.

As the hemorrhage had for the present subsided, the nurse and the valet were able to perform their functions effectually, under the direction of the doctors, who soon left the patient entirely to their care.

I watched over him a long time in utter hopelessness, although his breathing was still perceptible. The one or the other of the doctors came every hour during the day to inquire into his progress. As midnight approached, and there was nothing to be done in the sick room, I dismissed the nurse to an adjoining chamber for rest, while the doctor retired to another.

During the night the patient slept too soundly, and alarmed me by the depth of his respiration; but very soon awaking, he fixed his eyes on me with a look indicating consciousness, but also deep despair. He motioned me to stoop my ear to his mouth. I did so, while in a whispered articulation, he said:— 'Helen, my good, my excellent wife! But I cannot talk. You will, I fear, at first, be entirely without money; go to my desk, the key is yonder in my waistcoat pocket. You will find a purse in the desk, embroidered and tasselled with jewels, it is full of gold, secure it. I will not offend your purity by telling you for whom it was originally designed.

'May God forgive me this, and all my other innumerable sins!'

'Amen!' I exclaimed, as I knelt by him.

He ceased speaking, and lay an hour without movement, and then began to speak again in the same low indistinct whisper.

'Helen,' he said, 'they wanted me to sign away your right

over our boy, and the whole of the property. All, all, they wanted, to atone for what they called the unpardonable sin of my having sanctioned your secession from the church. They forced the pen into my hand, which they wanted to guide, but I resisted—yes, effectually; but the violence of my resistance produced the hemorrhage.'

He then sank into silence for about half an hour, when I again perceived his lips moving. 'You,' he said, 'my pure, my faithful wife, they called a heretic and an outlaw. But I did not sign, neither did I *confess* to the Jesuit.'

'Were you not then in confession with him,' I asked, 'when I was refused admittance to you?'

'No, no; he shall never bring me to that. But, oh, Helen, in his rage, he cursed me in the name of the Holy Trinity! I am lost—lost for ever!'

As he said this, he fainted. I administered a cordial medicine, he again revived, and shortly after fell asleep.

Within an hour of daybreak, he awoke in a paroxysm of weakness and terror, that touched me to the very soul. 'I am dying,' said he, 'oh Helen, send for a priest, and give me the last sacraments!'

I inquired whom I should send for; he mentioned the village priest, a harmless man, who was not long in arriving with an assistant priest, who accompanied him.

As they entered the room, bearing the host, I perceived by the dim lamp light which pervaded it, that the features of the accompanying priest were hidden by a black hood. His figure was bent like that of an aged man, and as I thought him a stranger to me, I took no further notice of him.

They both approached the sufferer, and I, softly pressing the hand of my husband, to indicate to him that I was retiring, withdrew to an adjoining room, to supplicate in silence for the departing spirit.

In about an hour the chamber door opened, and as I appeared before it, the village priest beckoned me to enter.

The glazed eyes of Fitzgerald, who was evidently in the last agony, were fixed upon the crucifix which was held before him by the priest.



As I approached to take his hand, his eye wandered to my face, and rested there. Suddenly, an expression and movement of the most frantic agony distorted his features—he raised himself up, with a cry of piercing distress, and fell back lifeless!

The assistant priest, who had been bending over him, now stood erect by the bedside, with his hood thrown back, and as I casually glanced at him, I encountered the fixed gaze of the 'placid' Jesuit.

The deplorable manner of my husband's death, evidently accelerated by that priestly power he had so earnestly deprecated, shook me fearfully. I could not escape from the terror of his last look, and the wild shriek that accompanied it, except to follow the departed spirit to that world in which the illusions of time are exchanged for the realities of eternity!

The solemn mockery of that mystic cross on which the sins of the world were once expiated, as exhibited in ivory miniature to the sightless eye of death, contributed to the horrors of retrospection, and caused me to deplore the facility with which I had yielded to the command of my husband to 'leave him with the priests.' I now reproached myself bitterly for having ever left him with them. But it was too late for regret, and tears were unavailing.

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## CHAPTER XV.

ON the 24th of May, 1824, while the funeral obsequies were being performed, and the remains of Mr. Fitzgerald consigned to the silent vault where his ancestors lay, I gathered my five children round me in my own room. As I viewed their sweet but helpless infant forms, the eldest not having attained her sixth year, and felt that I was now their sole dependence on earth, I could not but be alive to the solemnity of the charge. But reflection told me there were thousands of widowed mothers in the world, on whom such a charge must fall still more heavily than on me. In losing my husband I had not lost a companion

or an adviser—I had been accustomed to live even without his sympathy, or any of those tender cares which form part of the dues of a wife. But the father of a family, even under the most negative aspects of his character, is still a heavy loss, where his children are young, and incapable of acting for themselves; and the widowed mother, if not secured by legal provision in the possession of her accustomed competency, becomes, from the moment of her husband's death, an alien not only from comfort, but from family connexions, and is at once obliterated from her former circle in society.

I had every reason in my own case to suppose that I was left in full power to protect my children, and sustain with them my own position in life; and although I could not but be aware that the personal property of Fitzgerald might be swallowed up in payment of his accumulated personal debts, I believed his estates to be free from encumbrance. The ignorance in which I had always been kept of his pecuniary affairs had never appeared to me as an evil, but now I perceived for the first time the inconvenience and danger of it. Accustomed from my childhood to receive, without toil or thought, a continuous supply of every want, it was not until within a few months that I had discerned, even partially, the value of money. It had always been to me like a weed of earth, ever springing up and within reach whenever my hand chose to gather it.

Recent experience had somewhat disturbed this security, and laden me with a new care. Still I was very far from estimating the importance of that all pervading ingredient of the social structure, without which, as society is at present constituted, the whole machinery of life falls to pieces; and money is, no doubt on that account, often mistaken for the supreme good.

On the return of the funeral party, I was summoned, in the name of the Jesuit, to attend the reading of my 'late husband's will.'

As I knew no more of *any* will than what I have already related to my reader, I was struck with surprise and inexpressible apprehension by this message, but I instantly obeyed the summons, and joined the assembled auditors in an adjoining drawing-room. It did not occupy many minutes to apprise me,

that the whole of our family property was placed in the hands of the two priests who attended my husband in his last moments, and who now assumed the office of whole and sole executors to his will. Everything was left at their disposal, except the landed property inherited by my son, to whom they were appointed sole guardians during his minority, as well as trustees to his estates.

Not the slightest mention of myself, except in speaking of my *jointure*, or of my four girls, or of any provision for their subsistence, had been made in any part of this extraordinary document.

Several of my husband's distant relatives were present, who had a right to expect some recognition in such a deed. But it was unusually succinct where it should have been diffuse, and the powers of the executors were so ostentatiously stated as to fill its pages, and leave those who ought to have been more interested in it without any part to perform, but that of silently listening to its provisions.

All authority had been vested in the two priests, but how it had been done, and by whom, none would now ever know, until the day when the secrets of all human life shall be revealed.

Unable to sustain in the presence of others the shock which the reading of this document had inflicted on me, I was assisted out of the room, and left, at my own earnest request, alone, to endure as I best might that view of the future which now forced itself on my unprepared mind. The disrespect to myself implied in the conditions of the will, and in the choice of its executors, was only a secondary consideration to me. Those prophetic words of the departed, 'You will fall into the grasp of the priests,' uttered in such seeming agony, were already fulfilled by the provisions of his own will. When I had taken a review of all that had so recently passed on this subject, while my husband lay on the bed of death, and now beheld the result, it was impossible to believe otherwise, than that some deep artifices had been employed to produce it. And discerning, as I could not fail to do, the state of pecuniary embarrassment in which I might be placed by being left entirely dependent on the will of the executors, it seemed to me that I was inextricably in

the toils of that priestly power so dreaded by the deceased, and which, consistently with itself, could not fail to persecute me to the latest moment of my life.

My darling boy, as heir to the patrimonial estates, would of course be suitably provided for; but for my four infant daughters, I should be dependant on the Jesuit-executor for whatever he might deign to award me for their use.

Of him I speak as though the whole testamentary power were comprised in him; the parish priest\* being a mere man of straw, probably associated with the Jesuit only to divide with him whatever odium might arise from the exercise of the extraordinary powers delegated to them jointly.

While occupied in these reflections, I recollected the jewelled purse, which Fitzgerald, when giving it to me, had desired me instantly to secure, but which, in the momentous occurrences which immediately succeeded this injunction, had entirely escaped my memory. It was not, perhaps, yet too late, and I went at once to get the key of the desk, and to obtain possession of this valuable gift. Valuable indeed it would have been to me at that moment, as I was then almost without money.

I found the key, and hastened to the library, where the desk was always kept, only to learn that I had no power to open it! It was already under the executor's seal. I stood like one petrified, so filled with self-reproach for my neglect, and so lost to everything around me, that I did not observe there was another person in the room, until the fall of a book caused me to turn my head.

As I did so, the face of the Jesuit presented itself, and his eyes met mine, with an expression that neutralized the softness of his placid smile.

I appealed to him at once respecting the desk, which I said I meant to appropriate, as containing my husband's private papers, and, therefore, belonging exclusively to myself. He replied, with an air of authority, that such an appropriation could not be admitted, as the executors would require possession of all manuscripts left by the deceased, in aid of their official duties.

'At any rate,' said I, 'there is an article in the desk which



was given me by my husband, but a short time before his death, and which I have allowed to remain there until this moment. I had, indeed, forgotten it ; but as it is not a manuscript, it cannot be wanted for the purpose you have mentioned.'

The Jesuit then inquired the nature of it ; and, when informed, remarked that an article of that kind was so essentially a part of the personals of the estate, that it would be impossible for the executors to relinquish their right to dispose of it.

I must have betrayed extraordinary emotion as this decision was pronounced, for the Jesuit stepped hastily towards me, with extended arms, as if he would have saved me from falling. He stopped short, however, as I waved him off with my hand.

'I am sorry, madam,' said he, 'to oppose your wishes, at my very entrance on the painful duties I have allowed myself to assume, at the earnest request of a dying man. But, how much soever I might be disposed to place myself under *your* guidance, I could not, as *one* only of the executors, comply with your wishes on the point in question, without the aid of my coadjutor, especially as I know what the *duty* of the case must be.'

'Father Rénel,' said I, with some warmth, 'you allude to the testamentary duties you have arrogated, as though you had assumed them from compassion to the dying. Pray let me implore the extension of that sentiment to the living, by allowing me the perusal and examination of a document so important to myself and family as my husband's will.'

The Jesuit quietly replied, 'If, madam, you had been a party to your husband's will, I could not have refused your request ; as you are not, you must not take it amiss that I decline to expose it to your cavils.'

He then bowed low, with an air of solemn mockery, and moving slowly, left the room.

As the door closed after him I was again alone, and at liberty to resume my gloomy forebodings. The gauntlet had now certainly been thrown down ; and hostilities actually commenced between the Jesuit and me. Had I done right in yielding to the impetuous feelings inspired by the wrongs inflicted on me ? To what purpose would be my resistance to a power above law,

above conscience, above public opinion, except to destroy myself and family?

Far better would it be for me meekly to sit down under evils so irremediable, than to resist them. But my children—how should I answer it hereafter to them, if I suffered all their rights to be forfeited without a single effort to redeem them. ‘I will write at once,’ said I, ‘to my uncle, Sir Felix; he is a lawyer, and he, I am sure, will help me.’

I wrote to him under this impulse without the loss of an hour.

Meanwhile, I endeavoured to make an estimate of my pecuniary resources, or rather, what I supposed them to be, independently of the will,

The annual income arising from my jointure I had always understood as amounting, jointly with my uncle’s settlement, to five hundred pounds. A miserable pittance, certainly, for five persons! I attempted in vain, by calculation, to apply it so as to cover our wants.

Another difficulty arose in regard to my jointure, viz., my ignorance of the manner in which it had been secured to me.

During my married life I had never heard the subject mentioned, nor did I know where to apply for its periodical payments. But as it had been alluded to in the will, it was of course secure; and our man of business would be able to furnish me with such information as I might require respecting it.

By the reading of the will, my comparatively destitute situation had become known to the funeral guests. They were so numerous as almost to fill my spacious mansion; for the popularity of my husband during the better part of his life, and until very lately, had been unbounded in his province. These now precipitately departed, like persons fleeing from a falling house.

In a few hours I was alone. My position on that day formed an epoch in my life. I soon found myself plunging into meditations which were maddening; and, to divert the course of my thoughts, ran wildly about my deserted house, so lately filled with *friends*, to search for some one who might have remained behind. But I gazed on desolation. The whole fabric around me, no longer sustained by the golden cement that had hitherto

held it together, and which was indispensable to its existence, seemed tumbling to pieces; and could I as easily have run away from it as my late *friends* had done, I should have followed their example in that moment of despair. In endeavouring to flee from myself, I visited chambers and recesses in every part of the house, some of which I had never seen before. The servants, acting under relaxed authority, were moving idly about, or lounging at every turn. They retired before me, frightened at my unexpected appearance, or touched by my visible distraction, while I continued my perambulation until I came to a small room near to my own apartments, which I was accustomed to call my boudoir. This room was my *oratory*—my *confessional*, where I was wont to pour out my heart to God—my *sanctuary*, in which I vented my domestic sorrows—my reading-room, in which I sometimes, but not often, wrapped myself up in the dreams of poets, or in those of my own fancy, and to which I brought my children occasionally, that I might have them all to myself.

The door of my boudoir, as I reached it, was ajar, and I entered it abruptly at this moment, supposing it unoccupied, to seek for peace in prayer.

My disordered air startled a venerable form which I found there, reposing in an arm chair. It was Father Ossory. I had then at last found one friend, whom my sudden destitution had not driven from my walls.

‘Pardon me,’ said he, as I advanced towards him, ‘that I am so slow in rising to apologize to you, my good friend, for my being in an apartment which I know is sacred. But in the distraction occasioned by the sudden departure of your guests, I came here to get out of their way, until I could take leave of you after they were gone. I will now retire and await your leisure in another room.’

It is necessary that I here apprize my reader that Father Ossory (for I have never called him by any other name) had two years since, at more than eighty years of age, publicly renounced Romanism, and joined the Protestant Episcopal Church. Of course, he had lost caste by this renunciation, and had been ejected from every circle in which he had formerly

moved. But he had counted the cost beforehand ; and although, with a heart still capable of attachment, he could not but feel such a wrench from the associates of his earlier years, yet in a cause like this he considered whatever he had lost as mere dross, in comparison with what he had gained. His income, also, was of course lost to him, and every other source of official gain, and he had since lived on an annuity of twenty pounds, which formed all the property he now possessed, so that he was in poverty as well as in isolation, enduring daily that species of persecution which, in such a locality as his, could not fail to pursue any man who had renounced the errors of the Romish Church. He resided in a very small, but neat cabin, not far from Beech Park, and had, since his conversion, been a frequent visitor to me, and a friend and spiritual adviser, ever ready to serve me. The meeting him at this moment, now the only friend that remained to counsel and support me under the violent shock I had received, was an unspeakable comfort to me.

At my entreaty, he resumed his seat, and patiently waited, as he had sometimes done in former times, until my bursting heart had relieved itself in tears. When I was capable of listening to him, he opened the holy book which lay before him, and in which, previous to my entrance, he had been marking passages for my perusal ; and now read them aloud, page after page, until he had drawn my thoughts from the irritating circumstances of my position, and enabled me to resume some command over my feelings.

‘Oh, this blessed book,’ said he, as he closed it. ‘Time has been when I knew it not, and when I withheld it from you, my young friend. What would you now do without it? Forgive me the errors of my former advice, and my more than erroneous attempts at instruction ; I can never forgive myself. At some future time, if it please God, I will give you the history of my mind in latter years, and show you the infinite prize I have gained in a knowledge of the true God.’

As I began to weep afresh, he said, ‘And you, my friend, are you not also in possession of the same treasure? Even your afflictions, your losses at this time, are but working out for you that future happiness for which you hope, and for which, if an



option were given you, you would willingly suffer the loss of all things. You believe in God; believe also in his power and mercy.

‘The clouds that hang over you are menacing, but he can disperse them; or if, for your benefit, it be his purpose to permit the storm to fall on you, he will sustain you under it. “Only believe,” says our blessed Saviour; “all things are possible to him that believeth.” Bear this great truth in mind, my afflicted friend, and supplicate for faith, as the principle above all others that unites you with Omnipotence, and enables you to overcome the world. I now leave you; but I am within call whenever I can be useful to you, and only too happy to be allowed to serve you.’

As the venerable man departed, and the sacred words he had uttered still rested on my ear, I could not but contemplate with wonder and admiration the difference betwixt his present views and those of former times, when the cabalistic agency of ‘the Virgin,’ formed the chief theme of his discourse, and aves and beads were his sole medicine for a mind diseased.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

WHILE awaiting my uncle Sir Felix’s reply to my application to him, the Jesuit, one morning, about a week after the funeral, sent to request that I would appoint a time when he might have an interview with me, on important business.

I replied, that I was at leisure to receive him immediately; and when I had learnt that he was coming, I sent for my little son to be with me during his stay.

The Jesuit entered my room with an air of seeming depression, and great meekness of demeanour, which was so striking, that I began to think I had misjudged him.

How seductive, how omnipotent is manner! He who can command this, is in possession of ‘a key to unlock hearts.’

The *humble* man remained standing, even after I had begged

him to sit. He opened his mission with a suavity of look and language that suggested so strongly the idea of benignity,—as to stagger, and almost disarm me.

He deplored, in choice and flattering terms, that perversity of fate, which in his intercourse with me restricted him to speak only on one subject, which he feared might be painful to me.

In the course of his official duties as executor to the will, he said, he found it necessary to inquire into the amount and sources of my future personal income. 'You are aware,' said he, 'that there is no provision made for you by your husband, in addition to the jointure settled on you at your marriage, and I am sorry to inform you, that the property (which was personal) on which that settlement was made, has in great part disappeared. In consequence of this, your original income is now so much reduced as scarcely to amount to a hundred per annum. Perhaps you have been some time aware of this?'

I could make no reply, for the shock was so great that I felt myself fast falling into utter incapacity; but the hand of my child was in mine, and the comfort of that little hand, at that moment enabled me to retain my senses.

The Jesuit had paused for an instant, but he now resumed his discourse.

'Of the settlement made by your uncle, I have a still worse account to give, *that* having been cancelled by the donor himself, immediately on your apostatizing from the church of your fathers. Mr. Fitzgerald was not a man of strict business habits, I find, on looking into his affairs; and having omitted to see that your uncle the bishop signed the deed at the time of your marriage, he had left it in his lordship's power to cancel it, as he had afterwards done, and for the reason which I have specified.

'The landed property, you will be happy, madam, to learn, is so little encumbered, that it is likely to produce an annual income of from nine to ten thousand pounds. Of course, this amount will not be required for the use of your son at present. It will therefore be set aside—except what may be expended in masses for the soul of the deceased—to accumulate until your son attain his majority. Meantime, I am sorry to say, we find pressing debts lying against the estate, which require to be paid

as speedily as possibly. There is, however, no personal property in existence. It has all been spent without being accounted for, except an extensive stud, and the costly collections of *virtu*, pictures, works of art, furniture, plate, and other valuables, with which the house is stocked, and which may possibly cover the debts of the deceased, if well sold. To accomplish this, it will be necessary to put an immediate end to the expenses of your extensive establishment. In doing this, we shall be under the necessity of requesting you to withdraw with your family to another residence; and as the reduced state of your income, without any other consideration, renders such a step necessary, you will perhaps, madam, not be disposed to regret or postpone the change.

‘The debts of honour incurred by the deceased at the gaming-table, and which have already been presented with an air of demand, as though they could legally be sustained, we have decided on repudiating. I trust, madam, your sense of honour on this point is not so nice as to require us to revise our resolution.’

The great calamities of life, like the thunderbolt or the avalanche, provoke no resistance. Their mission is fulfilled, and their work of destruction completed, too rapidly to admit of reaction. Even when the first shock is over, and consciousness breaks upon us of our having been, as it were, hurled into another planet, or thrown to the mercy of an element opposed to the very principles of our existence, we attempt not to extricate ourselves, but sink quietly down into ruin.

Such were my feelings, as the Jesuit wound up his narrative of torture with words of mockery. I lifted my child to my arms, and pressed him to my cold and almost lifeless bosom; while his soft caresses, and the entwining of his little arms around me, brought tears that for the moment saved me, and enabled me articulately to say, ‘I presume, Father Rénel, that your business with me is ended; or have you anything further to communicate which it is necessary for me to know?’

‘You are right, madam,’ said the Jesuit, ‘in not shrinking from what still remains to be told to you. The provisions of the will do not permit my colleague and myself to interfere at all in

your pecuniary arrangements for yourself and daughters. I cannot, therefore, trouble you with any proposal or suggestion respecting them. But as it is a part of our official duty to make some immediate provision for your son, we propose, if you are willing to take charge of him for the present, to place him with you, and to allow you at the rate of twenty pounds per annum for him. Will this satisfy you, madam ?

Insulted beyond measure at the manner and meaning of this proposal, from him who had already denuded me of everything, under pretence of executing my husband's will, I could find no words of sufficient import to reply to him ; and he resumed his discourse.

'You will not long,' said he, 'be burdened with this duty, as it was not the will of the testator that his son should be reared in heresy. We are therefore instructed to remove him from you on his attaining his fifth year, and to place him in some Catholic college, either foreign or domestic, in which, if he live, he may receive a training adapted to his future position in life.'

I know not what more the Jesuit said. I remember only that, feeling my brain as it were on fire, I darted towards the handle of a bell that hung near me, and pulled it violently. In a moment I was in the arms of my own maid ; and, as I was afterwards told, in a delirium that continued for several hours.

I had braced myself under the previous inflictions of the Jesuit, determined not to give way ; but when the climax came, and the very child in my arms—my own child—was rent from me, as my property had been, by his sacrilegious hand, my self-control utterly forsook me.

When reason returned, I found several letters on my table, in reply to some which I had written when I first became acquainted with the tenor of the will. They were, in general, tenderly expressed, for I had addressed only those persons whom I supposed to be real friends. But they all declined to interfere in my affairs, seeing they were in the hands of the Romish church. Even my uncle, Sir Felix Mulgrave, my father's brother, and the inheritor of his estates, though a barrister of high standing in London, and of course skilled in law, recoiled at the



idea of catechizing a Jesuit, lest he might bring on himself the maledictions of his church.

As I was scarcely convalescent when I attempted the perusal of these letters, their contents threw me into a state of hopelessness and helplessness as adverse to my interests as to my peace of mind. Father Ossory, who spent some part of every day with me, by constantly speaking of the lofty themes which filled his own soul, and reminding me of Him 'who bore our griefs and carried our sorrows,' and who had invited the 'heavy laden' to cast their burdens on Him, kept me alive to a perception of those divine realities, and thus moderated my distress. The frequent contemplation of them enabled me to regain that confidence in God, of which an excessive worldly care was defrauding my soul, and perilling even its salvation.

I became resigned, and comparatively tranquil. It was, indeed, high time that I should be so, for the new duties that awaited me were every day accumulating.

Bereft as I was, on all sides, of every earthly friend, and literally alone in the world, with a family of children dependent on me for support, and possessing only a beggarly income totally insufficient to their wants, I felt it an imperative necessity that I should make a last effort to avert or diminish the wrongs that had been perpetrated on me. Of the possible fruitlessness of my efforts I was fully aware ; but, borrowing courage from despair, I resolved on remonstrating with my adversary, not only on the barbarity of his robberies, but on the absence of all precedent in the ordinary conduct of executors for outrages so revolting both to justice and humanity.

That I might not be betrayed into any expression which from its strength or bitterness should injure my cause, I decided on making my appeal by letter. Having done so, I awaited, with a throbbing heart, the result.

Four days elapsed before my missive was acknowledged, when I received a message from the Jesuit, saying it was indispensable that he should have an immediate interview with me. Of course this message was a mandate.

The ignorance in which women are left of all business matters, is an egregious error in their bringing up ; and often fatal to

themselves and families, when left in widowhood. Ignorant as I was myself of these things, it was necessary that I should endeavour to obtain some degree of information, respecting the amount and position of the family property, that I might be armed for the coming interview with the Jesuit.

To this end I sent for my late husband's man of business, Mr. Keogh.

I had often heard Mr. Fitzgerald speak of him as an acute and diligent man of business, and his deportment was that of a respectful, though, perhaps, too obsequious, adviser. Knowing how thoroughly he was acquainted with my husband's affairs, I determined on stating my whole case to him.

I had some difficulty in obtaining an appointment from him. When he at last appeared, his whole demeanour was so altered from what it had formerly been, that I was on the point of dismissing him abruptly, without explanation.

Ah! how much I had then to learn of what my own deportment and views should be, in order to adapt myself to my new position in life!

When I began to speak to Keogh of my affairs, instead of paying that deferential attention to a client's voice which had been usual with him, his eyes wandered about my apartment, from one object to another, until he at length rose from his seat, while I was speaking to him, to handle and admire a monthly-rose tree, that was blooming in one of its windows.

At this moment I ceased speaking; and when he turned towards me, as if expecting me to go on, I said to him—'Mr. Keogh, you do not seem interested in my affairs.'

He replied, with the greatest familiarity and nonchalance—'Bless you, my dear lady, I am always interested where I think I can be of use; but I fear your case is one in which I cannot act to any purpose; especially as Father Rénel, one of your late husband's executors, has desired me to reserve myself for him; and having put a handsome fee into my hand, you see I could not so well act for you, unless you could, as I may say, buy him out.'

'I speak plainly, dear lady, as I really wish you well; and I do not forget how many years I acted for Mr. Fitzgerald, who

was a generous client to me while he lived. It is unfortunate for your interests, ma'am, that by turning Protestant you have placed yourself in hostility with the church.'

After a few more words of strained civility, he abruptly took leave ; and thus ended all my hopes of assistance from him.

I had now only to receive the Jesuit, and to cast myself on the chances of another interview with him.

Father Rénel, as he entered my room, exhibited striking proofs that his toilet had been more than usually attended to. It would, nevertheless, have been lost on me, had not his air and manner assumed so new a character as to arrest my attention. His fine person and commanding features, not now disfigured by the visible assumption of an artificial humility, which they ordinarily bore, suggested the idea of his appearing in a new guise.

He looked grave, and would have looked benevolent, but that a countenance with a *Mephistophiles* cast in it, aims in vain at this expression.

Completely broken down, and suffering under every species of humiliation, I nevertheless felt my pulses quicken and my indignation kindle at sight of him.

As he seated himself, he fixed his eyes, the expression of which changed every moment, both on me and the child in my lap, so as to revolt and appall me, and cause me to cling to my infant for support.

After sitting a few seconds in silence, he bent his head towards me, and in a low, deep tone, inquired if we were alone.

'Certainly, Father Rénel ; but if you are in want of anything, I am near the bell, and can ring it without rising?'

'I want nothing, madam, but yourself—no ear but your own—and what I am about to say to you requires not only your closest, but your most dispassionate attention.'

This exordium was so extraordinary, that as the Jesuit uttered it, I was thankful that I had placed my maid, who would fly to me at the first touch of the bell, in an adjoining room.

The Jesuit proceeded—'I regret, madam, with poignant feelings, the pain which, from the tenor of the letter I have received from you, I must have inflicted on you in a recent

interview, by too abrupt a disclosure of the barbarous requirements of a will, which I have, unfortunately for myself, undertaken to execute. But courageous and admirable as I had always found you, I——'

'Pardon me, father,' said I, hastily and imprudently interrupting him, 'I cannot allow myself to receive compliments from you, neither can I listen to reproaches aimed at the dead. The will in question, though attributed to my husband, I have the strongest reason for believing was neither dictated nor consented to by him.'

I threw out this observation at random, on the faith of what my husband had said with his dying breath, and, though frightened at my own temerity, hoped it might strike. But the priest heard it without allowing a muscle of his face to be moved, merely saying—'I am unpractised in bandying either compliments or reproaches, madam. But had I not supposed you superior to the ordinary weakness of your sex, I might have been more cautious, though I dared not have been less frank, in my official statements. It must be remembered, too, that there are duties so absorbing as to preclude foresight, and dangers so appalling as only to be averted by fearlessness. But I must not forget that my object in coming here is primarily to reply to your letter.

'You express yourself, madam, as aggrieved by the conditions of your husband's will, for which, of course, I cannot be responsible. You should distinguish betwixt the will, and the executors of it; instead of which, you direct your reproaches and resentments against me, as though I were acting alone, in execution of a document which I had myself dictated. There are, however, conditions annexed to the fulfilment of your husband's will, of which it is time I should apprise you, as they in some measure change the character of it, by placing in your own hands an optional power, capable of annulling its whole provisions.

'Your husband well knew, for he was a true son of the church, the powers of that church, and, in making his will, invested his executors with a discretionary power, which, under the church's sanction, is to be used for your benefit.



‘Thus, an invisible, but an all-powerful hand, that can restore to you all which you deplore as lost, waits to be gracious to you. Your vanished wealth, your lost position, your numerous friends, your beloved children, are all placed within your reach, by the fulfilment of a single condition.’

‘I raised my eyes to the face of the speaker, doubting if I heard aright. He saw my surprised and sceptical look, and replied to it.

‘Yes, incredulous you may well be, of so much mercy, where none could have been expected. In apostatizing from the holy church, you forgot the God of your fathers, and he has now forgotten you. You have set yourself adrift on the ocean of a Protestant heresy, and its waves are bearing you to speedy destruction. Disunited from the *visible* communion of the church on earth, you are consequently disunited from the *invisible* communion of the Holy Mother, and from that of the saints and angels in heaven, and from God himself.

‘Does no touch of pity for yourself agitate your heart, as the foaming billows roll over you? Or, madly and falsely heroic, are you determined on spiritual suicide? Helen Mulgrave! What magic still lingers round that name, and even now awakes enthusiasm! Child of the holy Catholic church! endowed, even to prodigality, with talent, with beauty, with grace, and attractions of every kind, to render you worthy of the name you bore, and of the glorious church which developed such powers, and which is still willing to call you her own, and re-purchase for you an inheritance amongst the great and the mighty, both in earth and heaven.—’

I was about to impugn flattery so insulting, and to break up the conference, but the Jesuit continued, with a vehemence which seemed determined to sweep everything before it,—‘I implore you to stay your course—to pause—to kneel—and to confess your sins! Authorized to act as your deliverer and confessor, I should listen to the outpourings of your heart with a depth of sympathy that would divide with you your guilt. You have a confessional in this house. Appoint a time when I may meet you there, and see you assume again the transforming duty of that sacred place. Bestow this one boon on yourself

and me, whose duty it is to attempt all things, and endure all things, in bringing back such a wanderer from the church's fold, to place her once more within its saving pale.'

Father Rénel here ceased speaking.

The mystery of my persecution was now unveiled. Why inquire further?

It was not Father Rénel who was my adversary: it was the Romish church itself, whose inquisitorial powers, neither deterred by my insignificance, nor revolted by the odium of its task, had stooped to take cognizance of a female in private life, and direct a siege of extermination against her, solely for having dared to renounce Popery, and embrace Protestantism! This was the sum total of her offence, and in wreaking its vengeance on her for that offence, the Romish church, calling itself Christian, would compass sea and land to force her back to its authority, or otherwise accomplish her destruction.

As the Jesuit paused, looking intensely but artificially earnest, as though he had staked everything on a single throw, I turned from his scrutinizing gaze, to arrange my thoughts, and muster courage for the reply he awaited.

God and mammon had been distinctly placed before me in the balance. Hence my course became happily clear, although a prescience of the fearful future rose like a gaunt monster to my imagination, showing up the appalling destitution to which I was consigning myself, and those dearer to me than life. I tried my voice several times before I was able, audibly, to say—'Father Rénel, I will not affect to misunderstand you, nor will I sarcastically thank the church for its parental solicitude on my behalf. The purpose of your mission is too obvious to be mistaken. You would restore to me the whole property of which you have robbed me, on a single condition—namely, that I should meet you in the confessional of the Romish church, and there renounce that Protestant faith which I have deliberately embraced on conviction. Is it not so?'

He bent his head, saying, 'For argument's sake, I admit your statement.'

'You are, then, the avowed master of my fate! I attempt not, at this moment, to penetrate the mystery which has made

you so. I am aware that your vocation exempts you from responsibility, in whatever you may dare to attempt in the service of your church, and that you hold yourself accountable neither to God nor man, but only to the hierarchy you serve. I do not, therefore, suspect you of personal malice to me or mine in what you have done, and are still doing, for the destruction of my devoted family. I only recognise in it a practical illustration of the spirit and morals of the Romish church, and the principles on which it is founded.

‘But I did not renounce Popery without consideration; neither did I adopt Protestantism without examination. I am, therefore, by God’s mercy, steadfast in adhering to it, and totally unprepared to accept your “thirty pieces of silver,” for a betrayal of that faith on which I found my hopes of everlasting life.

‘You are a man of understanding, Father Rénel, and will not infer from this that I am insensible to the value of that wealth of which I have been despoiled.

‘Reared in the lap of luxury, and ignorant of the expedients of want, I am bewildered and lost, as I contemplate the dreary waste to which you are consigning me; and, without faith in God, I should, perhaps, when I look at my children, be tempted, in view of it, to barter everything for the retention of what you are taking from me. But when the inspired volume which the Romish church withholds, and the God whom that volume reveals, are to be exchanged for Popery, the boon you offer for this sacrifice becomes “unrighteous mammon,” and is, in comparison, less to me than “a drop of the bucket,” or “the small dust of the balance.”’

As I ceased speaking, the Jesuit quickly rose, and, crossing the room to obtain his hat, stood with it in his hand before me.

‘Madam,’ said he, ‘I take my leave; for although, as one who is devoted to the welfare of your soul, I could linger ever here, and kneel but to kiss the hem of your garment, your impenitency makes it my duty to withhold any further remonstrance or exhortation. If, on reflection, you should relent, remember that nothing short of the cleansing power of the *confessional* could restore you to the good offices of the church, or reinstate

you in your relations with it. The ecclesiastical sentence that hangs over you is yet unpronounced; but, whenever it may fall on your devoted head, it will sink you in endless perdition.'

These words of doom were uttered in solemn and vengeful tones. But in a moment the placid smile returned, and, bowing low, the Jesuit retired.

I will not conceal from the reader that my nerves were completely shaken by this last menace of the Jesuit. The truth, or the error, which we are taught in childhood, is long-abiding, and savours of immortality. The grossest delusions, and the most irrational opinions, impressed on the ductile nature of infancy, sink deep into it, and incorporate themselves with its very life.

I had passed through years of reading and reasoning, before I felt the fetters of Popery loose their grasp on my imagination; and up to the very time of which I write, the mysterious powers of the spiritual world, as delegated to the Romish priesthood, and exercised by them on their dupes and victims, would still in hours of sleep or weakness, haunt and terrify me.

The decision which I had just expressed to the Jesuit, on the base barter proposed by him, although perhaps too hastily pronounced, I could not regret, even on reflection; and in full view of the consequences which must ensue from it, I could but cast myself on the mercy of God.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

As the ejection from Beech Park seemed to have become inevitable, in conformity with the will of the destroyer, I attempted to realize and prepare myself for it.

Yet I still lingered and looked back, now to one quarter, and then to another, for 'help against the mighty.' But in scanning the circle of my near relatives, whom death had spared, (that once happy family, on which formerly the sun never rose but to



bless them,) I could not find one of whom I could ask assistance.

My dear mother, and my younger sister Caroline, were living with my uncle, the Baron de Wallenstein, at Vienna, but not in circumstances to relieve me in any way; being less happy in their connexion with him than at first, owing perhaps, to their almost entire dependence on him.

The property that had been left to them by my late uncle the bishop, had, either through mismanagement or embezzlement, never reached them. They had therefore nothing which they could call their own, except my mother's small hereditary income, which was scarcely sufficient to defray their personal expenses, in the high society with which they mingled in the baron's house.

My sister Dora was far too distant for regular correspondence, and therefore knew but little of my position since my marriage. She had long been married to Sir Lucius Mac Neil, whom she had been instrumental in converting from Romanism; and who had accepted, several years since, a government appointment in India, notwithstanding his ample estates at home.

My uncle, Sir Felix Mulgrave, my father's successor to his estates, had found them so fearfully encumbered, as to make it difficult for him to raise, by mortgage, sufficient funds to support his own extensive establishment in London.

There was then nothing to hope for from any quarter, if I except my uncle De Carryfort, a man of fortune, without wife or family, residing in Paris; but with whom I had never had any intercourse.

The relations of my husband had been for some time before his death alienated from him; and when they became acquainted with his will, and learnt the position in which he had placed his wife, they doubtless made it a pretext to themselves for cutting a connexion which it was easy to foresee might become burdensome to them.

Staggered by the weight of care and terror that fell on me at this period, and confused in all my perceptions, I could scarcely discern right from wrong. I arraigned every action of my life, to find some cause in myself for the chastisements that had

fallen on me, and reproached myself for what I had hitherto deemed blameless.

My passed charities appeared to me but ostentation,—my self-denial but the pride of endurance—my humility but meanness—my patience but obtuseness—and even my adoration of the Supreme, but the natural homage of taste, for the sublime and the good!

All the established maxims of truth and reason were called in question, and the opinions and cherished sentiments of happier days cast from me as illusions.

My habits of acting alone remained, to guide me through the labyrinth of sorrows in which I was lost.

I had not yet decided on a place to retire to, on quitting Beech Park; but my lagging purpose was quickened by the receipt of a note from the executors, expressing impatience at my delay, and requiring me, unless I was determined to continue the occupation of the Park, to remove from it as speedily as possible.

They added, that they had come to the determination, notwithstanding the diminution it might cause in the proceeds of the sale, to allow me to select such articles of furniture from my present residence as might be indispensable to me in my future dwelling, provided I confined the selection to things of inferior value.

I had thought my spirit sufficiently broken to receive any further stroke from the Jesuit without emotion; but I found, on perusing this note, that I was still alive to insult. I failed not, however, to obey its injunction at once, by hiring a small cottage, not many miles distant from the park, in the vicinity of the town of —.

Alas! how bewildered, how undefinable were my feelings, as I wandered, on sufferance, through my own house, for the purpose of collecting a few necessary pieces of furniture, to place in my cottage; and, although I had forborne—I fear from pride—to take more than bare necessities, and those the most inferior I could find, they were still unsuitable to the lowly dwelling to which they were consigned

In spite of the impatience of the Jesuit, I lingered in the

house, which had for seven years been my home, and the birth-place of my children, until within a few days of the public sale. Time moves with rapid wing, when he conducts us to the commencement of a new era, on which we dread to enter.

Some days previous to the day of departure, I dismissed all my servants except Mary, who had accompanied me when I quitted my father's house.

She had continued in the capacity of my own maid, and had been an humble, silent participator in all my sufferings. She was now become my friend and consoler, attending me step by step, through the dark valley of humiliation, and alleviating by sympathy, and may I not also say by companionship, feelings that might otherwise have destroyed me.

I did little else, the last week of our stay in the house, but rove about the gardens and grounds, or wander from room to room, gazing on the familiar though unconscious things that surrounded me, and apostrophizing them as though they had possessed intelligence. I knew not that to part with inanimate things could inflict such an excess of pain.

My mind had so long been braced to an unnatural degree of tension, by the successive efforts of fortitude which I had been compelled to make, that now, when all was over, and nothing more remained to be done, I sank into a sort of childish weakness, and wept incessantly. I should, perhaps, have lost my reason as well as my fortitude, had not my younger child, my darling of a year old, shown symptoms of indisposition, that drew me in some degree out of myself. Yet even on an occasion like this, my sensibility was no longer what it had been—an incentive to exertion. On the contrary, one fit of crying succeeded another, until I became helpless, and without any recollection of what was necessary to be done.

Mary was now, in point of fact, the mistress, as well as the servant of the house. But for her, the hours had passed away without anything to mark their flight. I saw that the meals appeared as usual, but I knew not whence they came, and thought not of inquiring. On the last evening, as I passed through the spacious but disordered hall, and saw corded trunks, children's toys, and other things which had been placed

there to be in readiness for departure, and observed there, at the same time, Rover, my father's dog, passing from one object to another, with an occasional moan, as though he understood and participated in the distress of the occasion, I lost all self-control. So many thoughts of the past were awakened—so many deplored occurrences revived, by their association with Rover, that as they rushed on my recollection, I sank under a paroxysm of feeling that threatened my very existence.

Forgetful of everything, I observed not that Mary was sitting the whole night by my bedside, nor did I once recollect the fatigue she had gone through in the day, and the consequent want of rest.

The night was one continued struggle betwixt life and death. The visions of early life passed before me—the fleeting joys of youth and ignorance, the never-to-be-forgotten separation from my parents and my home, and all the afflicting events that had succeeded this beginning of sorrows.

When the day dawned, I thought that never had the sun shed its beams on a more heart-stricken wretch. Mary was alarmed at my symptoms, and sent very early in the morning for Father Ossory.

His benignant countenance, beaming with the holiest affections, spoke *peace* to my soul, as he solemnly and devoutly pronounced the word, on entering my chamber. I poured out my heart to him in self-accusation; and he reminded me of Him who was 'wounded for our transgressions'—who was 'bruised for our iniquities,' and 'with whose stripes we are healed.' 'A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,' 'who bore our griefs and carried our sorrows.' 'He was oppressed and he was afflicted—he opened not his mouth.' 'Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him.' 'My child,' said he, "the Lord hath called *thee*, as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit," and He says to thee, "for a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee." "Fight, therefore, the good fight of faith"—"lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast possessed a good profession, before many witnesses." "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small." "There remaineth a rest for the people of God. Let us labour



therefore to enter into that rest." Then blessing me in the name of a compassionate Saviour, I was enabled to cast myself upon this all-sufficient source of strength and consolation.

No wonder that religion, which so greatly extends the sphere of the mind, in showing us our relations with God, should have so great power over us in the day of trouble, or that earthly cares should melt away in its presence. Thoughts of eternity inspire contempt for the arrogant assumptions of time, which would claim for its *sands of an hour* an importance commensurate with endless duration.

The murmurs of my spirit were soon hushed in listening to the divine words pronounced by Father Ossory; and observing that I had become tranquil, he left the room, that I might obtain rest.

Mary closed my curtains, and I enjoyed an hour of forgetfulness. When I awoke, I felt willing to submit to the will of God, and to acknowledge the right of divine arbitration in all my affairs.

It was well that I was thus prepared for the further chastisements that awaited me.

What I had hitherto suffered was but a foretaste of sorrow. The depths were still untried; I had not yet plunged into the 'deep mire, where there was no standing, and where the floods ran over me.'

Mary and I, early in the afternoon, accompanied by my children, mounted a rustic vehicle, which had been provided for carrying us to our new abode.

But before setting out on our journey, I desired that we might be driven round the great park; not only that I might behold for the last time the beautiful and magnificent trees there, then in full foliage, but that my elder children might receive a strong impression of the place, once their home, and in after years learn, from the loss of it, the fleeting nature of all earthly possessions, and the despotic power of a Jesuit priest.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

WE arrived at our little cottage about four in the afternoon. It was a two-story building, consisting, on the ground floor, of two small parlours and a kitchen, and over these, three decent bed-rooms. There was a little flower-garden in front of the house, and another, of a larger size, at the back. The site of the house was somewhat raised above the level of a public road, that ran along at a short distance from it in front.

The cottage was sheltered from a view of the road by a row of fine chestnut-trees, in full foliage, when I now saw them for the first time; and through their opening boughs, as I looked at them from a window, I discerned in the distance a range of lofty hills, on whose green sides sunbeams and shadows were sporting with each other. I was touched by the scene before me, for nature is always charming; but recollecting the much we had to do before we could compose ourselves for the night, I turned to the interior of the cottage. It had already, by Mary's orders, been made delicately clean, but there were arrangements to make of our scanty furniture, which Mary and I accomplished in a few hours, and then retired to rest.

The sleeplessness of the preceding night had well prepared us to forget, at least for a few hours, the change in our accommodations.

I awoke early in the morning from an uneasy sleep, and found my youngest child, my little darling, who lay by my side, in a high fever. All my skill in curative remedies was immediately exerted, but the want of our accustomed comforts had thrown us all, more or less, into a state of indisposition.

It is not necessary to describe the violent contrast betwixt Beech Park and the comparative hovel in which we now found ourselves. I saw my good Mary's countenance pale and agitated, as she presented herself at my bedside the next morning, and observed that she wept whenever she thought herself unno-

ticed. My own courage rose, as looking round on my children, I felt them to be dearer to me than ever, and hoped that we had reached the climax of our misfortunes. But Mary's too visible struggle affected me, and I felt that, should I lose her, nothing could replace her. Both she and I in a few hours were absorbed in one object.

My little one grew worse and worse, until an eruption appeared on her skin, which I immediately recognised to be the measles. It was on every account a most inauspicious moment for such a visitation; and as the next younger child had not yet had the disorder, she also would probably take it, and might be expected every day to sicken with it.

Mary soon recovered her elasticity, when she saw her services so much needed. But in performing the duties of a nurse, how often did both she and I forget ourselves, and look around in vain for the alleviation afforded by the ordinary comforts of a sick room! Neither sofa nor easy-chair was there, to form a change of bed for my child, or a resting-place for myself; nor had I a curtain to defend the dear infant's head at night, or to screen her swollen eyes from the oppressive light of day.

I might have brought such necessary articles with me, had I foreseen my wants, and my pride had allowed me to do so; but I had not been sufficiently subdued to accept as a gratuity what I considered as my own property.

Unskilled in contrivances suggested by want, I was long in learning to make the most of the means in my possession. Mary was a far better manager; but even she had been from her youth so accustomed to the plenty of an affluent establishment, that neither our separate nor our joint contrivances were at all equal to the demands made on our ingenuity by the want of essential things.

For two or three days after the appearance of the eruption on my child, there were no symptoms of danger, nor had I the slightest apprehension of the disorder's terminating fatally, although I was fully aware how unfavourable to the safety of its progress were the circumstances I have mentioned.

On the morning of the fourth day I first observed those symptoms which excited my alarm; before the termination of

the fifth my lovely infant was a corpse. In one week more, my next younger child was taken from me, in the same disease.

On these events I dare not, even at this distance of time, suffer myself to dwell. Only a mother who has hung over the sick pillow of her expiring infant, can understand the amount of agony included in those moments, when, watching the convulsive respiration, or gazing on the last ray of expression in the glazed eye, impotent to relieve, she waits for the sigh that announces all is over.

I saw my two little ones laid in one grave, and returned from their simple obsequies with a heart dead to all earthly things.

My soul refused to be comforted, and the oppression on it was so great as to paralyze my faculties. I no longer contended with fate, or struggled with my despair—no longer reasoned, no longer wept. The fountain of my tears—those silent intercessors for us with God—was dried up, and I wilfully tore from my heart every tender affection and every hope of happiness.

The sight of my surviving children, and their frightened, inquiring looks, were an insufferable annoyance to me. They appeared like spectres, with hideous features, resembling those phantoms which in a disordered state of the nerves pass before our sight in the darkness of the night.

Mary, whose tenderness and attentions kept pace with the increasing bitterness of my feelings, was equally repugnant to me, and in a few days a delirious fever relieved me from all sense both of the past and the present.

When we look back upon our conduct in such moments of trial, we ask with surprise and humiliation, what had become of those religious principles, of which, untried, we were so sure; or of that faith in God, which should sustain us, under every calamity?

Man is so seldom thrown upon the strength of his principles, so seldom severed from the adventitious supports that surround him, his real power of mind, or his faith, so seldom put to the test, that he may well be pardoned for overrating it, though not for condemning those who have failed in a combat which he has never tried.

I quitted the sick chamber with diminished sensibilities. The



physical languor and weakness that remained with me, continued to relax the energies of my mind, and complete what disease had begun—its entire subjugation to those external circumstances, which, in the plenitude of my powers and my possessions, I might have vaunted myself of being able to control.

Although a medical friend had attended both my children and myself without accepting a fee, the expenses of our illness, and those of the funeral, amounted to an alarming sum in the then state of my finances. While these events were taking place in my cottage, the public sale at Beech Park had been going on. It was now over, and the proceeds, it was said, amounted to far more than had been expected.

One morning, before I was scarcely convalescent enough to meet strangers, I received a visit from two of my late husband's creditors, who formed a deputation from a body of our former tradespeople. They came to inform me, they said, that they had taken the liberty, at the sale of my furniture, to buy for me a selected lot of articles, which they thought adapted to be useful to me, and which they begged to present as an offering of respect for myself, as well as of gratitude for favours formerly received from Beech Park. Amongst them were various articles of plate, which they hoped I would not consider as superfluous.

I was more affected than I wished to be by this unexpected sympathy and kindness, from a quarter in which I might least have expected to find it, for I was yet unable to bear emotion.

Our afflictions have done much for us when they have reduced our pride, and taught us lowliness of heart. But a very short time since, I could not have accepted such an offering without doing violence to my nature; but now I was able to receive it with feelings of gratitude which I was incapable of expressing.

When my bounteous present arrived, Mary and I found that it produced a delightful addition to our comforts, as, amongst many other things, were a sofa and two easy-chairs. The plate was especially welcome to me, as I was able to turn it immediately into money, and thereby discharge those debts which had been incurred by my illness.

As the agitation and suffering arising from our new position

subsided, and grief had settled itself into a sort of composure, I began to breathe more freely, and to look around me with a degree of fortitude, which I had not expected ever to feel again. I recollected the lonely situation of Father Ossory, who, in visiting me during my illness, was so much exhausted every time he came to my cottage, by the walk of two or three miles, that I became very desirous of bringing him nearer to us.

After Mary and I had consulted together, we thought that we might, without any material inconvenience to ourselves, offer him an asylum in our little cottage.

The addition which I had received to my furniture, enabled me to fit up a room for him in tolerable comfort.

When the invitation was given to him, he accepted it with so much gratitude as to indicate that he must have suffered greatly from the loneliness and want of comfort in his own cabin. He came to us without loss of time. Indeed, if he had lingered we might never have had the comfort of receiving him at all, as he appeared to be in a state of rapid decline. It was a great pleasure to me to entertain, under my humble roof, my father's friend, and one so long an inmate of our house.

On his arrival, the greetings of Rover, and the fond caresses of the children, excited him so much that I was obliged to put a speedy termination to them, by leading him to the quiet of his own room, in which, as his books and personals were already arranged, he found himself instantly at home.

Mary had become very skilful, though the occupation was new to her, in small cookeries, and proved herself so good a nurse, that in about ten days Father Ossory had so far recovered his strength as to look like a new man, and feel himself able to take the lead in our family worship. I never ceased to be thankful that I had been able to number him amongst us.

He had never yet made me acquainted with the immediate circumstances that had led him to a formal renunciation of the Catholic faith; but he one day spontaneously entered upon a relation of them.

'You must, I think,' said he to me, 'have been aware, before my functions as your confessor and spiritual adviser ceased, that I had become doubtful, on many points on which it had been my habit to be dogmatical.'

‘It is to you, my young friend, that I owe the beginnings of a conversion to that Protestant truth in which I hope to rejoice through all eternity. After I had been severed from your family, by distance and other circumstances, I was much alone, and had great leisure for reflection.

‘Examining myself, I became very unhappy and dissatisfied, in the performance of my accustomed routine of religious duty. I was as one that moved without knowing whither my path led; and every step I took seemed upon such dubious ground, that what I rested on appeared to sink from under me. You will doubtless be surprised, when I tell you that it had not, at any period of my life, been my practice to read the Scriptures.

‘In short, I was scarcely at all acquainted with them, or I think it would not have been possible for me to have remained so long in errors so flagrant as those I had always held. It was when I heard you, a mere child, whose intellect was but in its dawn, speak of the enlightening power of the Scriptures, that my sluggish conscience first awoke to a sense of my guilty omission, as a teacher of religion, in having never made myself acquainted with them.

‘Weighed down by a sense of the sinfulness of this omission, I feared, at first, that I had thrown away the salvation offered in the Gospel to him who believes. I began, however, to study the inspired volume in good earnest; but the more I did so, the more I felt myself in the wrong, and the less able was I to reconcile it with the Romish commentaries on it, or with the traditions, assumptions, and doctrines of our church.

‘I could find no scriptural ground on which to base these things, and our most pious and erudite writers failed to prove to me, that our church was ‘built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets.’

‘I will not weary you with a detail of my first steps in repentance and faith, or relate the struggles I had with myself, before I could determine on making known the change that had taken place in my views. I was, for some time, short-sighted enough to suppose that I might bind truth to my heart, and yet continue to hold the office of a Romish priest. I saw not, that by retaining this office, I should be continuing to teach, and to uphold the errors of Romanism; and that to do so, with the convic-

tions I had of their nature and tendency, would be a perilous offence against God.

‘It happened, at length, that a crisis arrived, which impelled me to a decision.

‘The immediate cause of this was an occurrence which was, perhaps, not unusual, but its character was new to *me*.

‘A man, who was a stranger, applied to me one day to confess him. I felt a particular reluctance to comply with his requirement, as there was something in his look and manner so indicative of extreme depravity, that I was afraid of learning what I might afterwards regret to know. I endeavoured to put him off, but he would not be diverted from his purpose, and I allowed him to enter the confessional.

‘I there learnt from him, that, aided by an accomplice, he had engaged to take the life of an individual, whom he named.

‘The intended victim was a gentleman whom I knew; and this circumstance heightened the shock of the communication. I remonstrated with the man on the heinousness of his purpose, and pressed forcibly on him the danger in which he would place his soul by the perpetration of it. He told me, it was to avert such a consequence that he had confessed his intention of committing the deed, and that he had brought money with him to buy off the guilt of it—offering me, at the same time, a hundred pounds. The affair, he said, was one of hire, and not of personal malice; and he, therefore, thought the sum he offered a very handsome one.

‘Never having been placed in similar circumstances, by any confessing party before, I became more indignant than was compatible with the perfect self-possession essential to my office.

‘I replied, that as a being amenable to God, who had said, “thou shalt not kill,” I could listen to nothing further, in relation to his atrocious purpose, unless he would enter into an engagement to relinquish it.

‘He answered, doggedly, that he was sworn to do it, and he would do it; but, as money was no object to his employer, he would double the amount he had offered, if that would satisfy the church.

‘I replied, that no amount could induce me to sanction so



monstrous a purpose, by making it a matter of barter, and that I would hear no more from him. He forgot himself for a moment, and became so violent, both in language and demeanour, that had I not succeeded in overawing him, the confessional might have been desecrated by personal outrage.

‘We parted thus.

‘As the nature of my professional vows did not permit me to give any warning to the doomed victim, I was obliged to lock up the corroding secret in my own breast. I examined every possible evasion of my vow, but could find none that would not have done violence to my conscience, and branded me with perjury of the most awful, and in Catholic verbiage, of the most damning kind.

‘I have said that the intended victim was a gentleman of my own acquaintance. I was one day sent for, hastily, to confess him. Alas! the bloody deed had been accomplished. I found him but just alive!

‘On retiring from this awful duty, I was so filled with horror at my participation in the atrocity, by my omitting to warn the victim, that I fled into the mountains, away from every human eye, for many hours, to give vent to my agony.

On returning home I was seized with an acute disease that scarcely left me with life. During my illness, my mind was emancipated from its thralldom, and I resolved to renounce for ever, before God and man, that *infallible church* whose laws compel its ministers to unholy vows, under the guise of faithfulness to the confessional; and whose authorities connive at the violation of every moral obligation, as expediency or its own interests may dictate.’

As the good old man ceased speaking, he sank back in his chair, and remained for some time apparently in meditation. At length, he exclaimed, with a fervour of manner foreign to his habits,—‘The Romish church I consider to be the great despotism of the world, which is supported by the power it obtains over the souls of men, through the agency of its confessional. In the scrutiny it exercises there, it aims at emulating the omniscience of the Most High, by endeavouring to “discern the thoughts afar off;” while, by barbarously dragging to light every

latent passion, and every half-formed evil purpose, which might otherwise have expired in embryo, the confessional becomes the nursery of crime.

‘The Romish church asserts, in effect, “all souls are mine,” thus arrogating to itself that which belongs to God alone. Hence, its persecution unto death, whenever it has power, of those who dissent from its creeds, stigmatising them as heretics, and consigning them, with religious solemnities, to an eternal damnation, under the blasphemous pretence of doing service to God!

‘This practice of human sacrifices, which is distinctly recorded as a doctrine in its creeds, is, in a church nominally *Christian*, so notoriously adverse to the precepts and spirit of Christianity, as to render the assumption of its name a revolting misnomer; and to reduce it by its hypocrisy below the level of the most barbarous paganism of the ancient world; and even below the thuggerly of modern India! Oh, what have I been doing for more than eighty years, that I have discerned these things only now!’

I was alarmed at the vehemence with which he uttered this lamentation, and approached him to inquire if he was ill.

‘No, my good friend,’ he replied, ‘not ill in body, but broken-hearted, and bewildered by the old things which I now view in so new a light. I am like a man who, having been born blind, is late in life endowed with sight. The light of truth overpowers me, and the magnitude and prominence of those things which I was wont to consider as nothing, overwhelm me by their importance, and their relation with eternity.

‘Having been born in the Romish church, it was the cradle of my intellect; and in that cradle I was taught those complicated dogmas, and those specious falsehoods, which were as little understood by me in subsequent years, as then. It is in the nature of the teaching of that church to stultify the intellect, as it is also the natural tendency of its sophistries to destroy the perception of truth.

‘As the first and most indispensable of its doctrines, I was despotically taught *the infallibility of the church*. In that doctrine it was my duty to rest without inquiry; and I became, what all Romish individuals become, more or less, an automaton,

actuated neither by reason nor by instinct, but coerced by an external agency, which, while it fetters the outer man with forms, and surrounds him with mimicries of sacred things, leaves the inner man to "perish for lack of knowledge." Knowledge is the antidote to popery. Alas, how great has been my guilt of ignorance!

As he ceased speaking, he arose, and went to his own apartment.

It was a dull, cold afternoon. The very cattle on the hill-sides, opposite our windows, moved sluggishly; and no human form had been visible for some time, when I saw passing along the road a tall stout female figure, very much muffled up, as if she too felt the cold. She moved with a hurried step, as though impelled by some urgency: but I should not perhaps have noticed her, had she not appeared to be a stranger.

Father Ossory returned to the room, while I yet stood at the window, which I immediately quitted, and took a seat by him near the fire. We sat for some minutes in silence, which he broke by saying, 'You are aware of the persecution from all quarters which I endured at first, on my secession from the Romish church, and by which even my life was occasionally endangered. But I have to thank God, that these things did not shake my faith in those divine truths, with which I had so lately become acquainted; and, believing that I had exchanged a false for a true worship, and being, as I trusted, under the scriptural banner of the cross, I had no anxiety respecting my personal safety, or even my life. I rather hoped that I might be found worthy to suffer unto death, in a cause to which I could now devote but a worthless fragment of my life; and my deep feelings of repentance for the past led me to court danger rather than to avoid it, in the performance of the few public duties that remained to me.'

As he ceased speaking, Father Ossory rose from his seat and stood in the front of the fire, when instantaneously a shot was fired through the window of the room, which, passing close by his head, penetrated an opposite panel in the wainscot.

I started from my seat, forcibly drawing him at the same moment out of the line of the window, towards which I had not

time to turn my head, before a second shot passed through the room, from the same quarter, and in the same direction as the former.

We both stood for a second, speechless, and then retired precipitately, to a room on the other side of the cottage, where the children and Mary were.

It was already dusk, and the increasing darkness of evening soon enabled us to close the window-shutters, without exciting any suspicion of our apprehensions in those who might be watching our movements from without.

In our little circle, those of us who comprehended our perilous position were in no enviable state of feeling. Not one of the least affected by the incident was Rover, who, chained within his own house, kept up an incessant growl, interrupted only by furious barking, which, by drawing attention to his whereabouts, might have provoked an attack upon him.

The good father was exceedingly distressed at the occurrence, because he considered it to have been on his account that we were placed in so much danger. Under this impression, he proposed that on the morrow he should leave us, and commit himself alone to the hazards of his own position; but of course I would not listen to such a proposal for a moment. Indeed, I was not at all certain, denounced as I had often been from the altars of different parish chapels in the county, when first I abjured Popery, that I was not as much the aim of the assassin as Father Ossory.

The children, without being informed of what had occurred, saw that there was some unusual anxiety amongst us, and became restless and uneasy. They were kept up, too, beyond their usual hour of going to bed, for I could not under such circumstances suffer them to be a moment out of my sight. Rover still continued growling and barking, and Father Ossory and I reconnoitred from the windows of his room, which commanded the public road, the appearance of things without; but the darkness was so extreme that nothing could be seen.

Our neighbourhood was utterly destitute of protection; so that had we been venturous enough to seek assistance for the night, from the small town in our vicinity, there would have



been little chance of obtaining it; while there would have been a certainty of our being watched and waylaid in the attempt. Father Ossory was, indeed, earnest in a desire to find his way to the town by the light of a hand-lantern, but we would not allow it.

After sitting up unusually late, we assembled round our family altar, and commended ourselves to God with fervent supplication that he would be our guardian through the hours of darkness.

It is certainly worth remembering, that we all slept as soundly as usual on that cold, dark, January night, and that we awoke on the morrow to hail a bright and cheerful morning.

The warm greetings with which we met on that morning, as we counted up our little household, and assured ourselves that not one was missing, formed an epoch, upon which I have often looked back with strong and grateful emotion.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

WHILE I was conversing with Father Ossory after breakfast, Mary, who had been into the town, returned. As she came into the room, she approached me with extraordinary earnestness and agitation; saying, that in her walk through the town, she had seen Margaret Brian, who was so handsomely and fashionably dressed that she should not have known her, had not her face been perfectly familiar to her. No recognition had taken place on Brian's part, and Mary was in doubt whether she had even seen her, as their eyes did not meet.

This information was sufficiently alarming to occasion a new source of anxiety; but after some reflection, it appeared to me more than probable that Brian herself might have been the party who aimed at playing the assassin on the preceding evening.

It was certainly corroborative of this suspicion, that the female figure, muffled up, which I had seen pass the window,

just before the shot was fired into it, answered precisely to the description which I had always heard of the size and height of Brian. If it was so, there was small chance of averting her purpose, although she had failed in her first attempt, as she was always inflexible in pursuit of her objects. But as she had been charged with felony by my father, and had only escaped the prosecution of the charge by flight, it might prove an effectual mode of defending ourselves against farther outrage, to seize her by legal authority on that ground.

In pursuance of this idea, I immediately wrote to a magistrate whom I had formerly known, and who was one of those who had held a council at Mulgrave Castle, at the time of the incendiary attempt to destroy it.

As I began to address this gentleman, who was a man of rank, I shrank from the task I had assumed; for, how will my appeal be received? was an inquiry which I could not but make, and which entirely unnerved me. It is always difficult for the poor and the obscure in life to interest their superiors in their difficulties, and still more so for those who having sunk very far below themselves, are no longer recognisable by their former associates.

But I pursued my object, in spite of my timidity, alluding as slightly as possible to my former self, and merely placing before the Marquis of — the perilous situation of my family, in a cottage half a mile distant from any other habitation, thus fired into, as I believed, by a woman, who was known to have plotted the destruction of Mulgrave Castle.

As the marquis lived five miles off, I was totally at a loss how to convey my letter to him; and as it was necessary that he should have it without delay, I seriously lamented the difficulty.

When Father Ossory understood the impediment, he insisted on being himself the bearer of the letter. It seemed almost barbarous to allow him to undertake such a commission; but he would not be diverted from it by any remonstrance I could make, on the impossibility of his reaching a place five miles distant, without a conveyance. Assuring me that he should easily and speedily find one, he set out on his errand.

Although I was well aware of the importance of not losing an hour in my application to the magistrate, and knew how much more effectual it would be through an agent like Father Ossory, I was filled with inquietude during his absence, lest, if any enemy should be in pursuit of his life, he might be assassinated before he could return to us.

When, therefore, we saw his bent and wasted form, in the dusk of the evening, entering the wicket, we were all rejoiced beyond measure ; and the children, clapping their hands, ran out to lead him in.

He had been so fortunate as to obtain a conveyance ; and yet he was so weary and exhausted, that I could not but reproach myself for every languid symptom he exhibited.

Nevertheless, it was a joyful re-union, and we felt afresh how valuable he was to us in our loneliness ; while he described himself as feeling like the dove sent out of the ark, until he found himself again in the cottage, in his accustomed easy-chair.

His mission had been very successful, the marquis of—— having promised him, that Brian should be immediately looked after, and ‘a bailiff sent to pay his respects to her.’ After she was secured, it would, he said, be the part of some of the family to appear against her.

I had not hitherto been aware, that after she had been committed to legal keeping, I should have anything further to do with her ; but now, in being obliged to appear against her I saw myself involved in serious consequences, if I should not be able to prove her the criminal I suspected her to be.

I was becoming very anxious, lest, by the movement I had made, I had rendered our position more insecure than ever, when I heard the wicket-gate move on its hinges, and turning my head towards the window, saw a gentleman enter the garden. It was my uncle from London ! Oh, what unexpected joy ! But he looked so jaded and worn, that my joy was instantly dashed with pain.

But he was there, and that was an event of itself to inspire gladness in our whole household. He had left his carriage and servants at the neighbouring town, and walked thence to the cottage.

✓ I had seen my uncle but once since my father's death, when he paid a visit to my husband and myself soon after our marriage, and remained with us several days. Since then, I had had but little intercourse with him; his affairs in London, and the encumbered estate of which he had come into possession, absorbing his whole time and attention.

He was visibly and excessively shocked at the situation in which he found me, and declared with great energy, that he had no idea of my having been left in such utter destitution. Fitzgerald, he said, assured him in the last interview he had with him, that my jointure was well secured, whatever might be the consequences to his estate or himself, of any irregularities he might fall into.

'I knew,' said he, 'that he was a gambler, but I did not suppose him to be so utterly unprincipled as I now find he was. What a will!' He lamented in the most affectionate terms his own inability to afford me aid against the executors, or to ameliorate my condition, except he could do so by any influence he might have in society. I then inquired if he thought it possible that I could in any way place myself more advantageously in London, where I should be near him, who would then be able to protect me.

I saw his whole countenance change, and assume an expression of strong emotion, as this proposal was made, and many minutes elapsed before he attempted a reply. When he did so, he hesitated and faltered, in a voice that was dry and husky, and in words that I did not at first quite understand. But I finally discovered, that it required more moral courage than my uncle possessed, to identify himself with a reduced and almost destitute relative, in the immediate vicinity of his own sphere.

Sir Felix Mulgrave, after sitting silent a few minutes, looked at his watch, and pleaded the lateness of the hour, and his expected immediate return to the inn, where he had ordered dinner, as an excuse for his instant departure. But I could not let him depart without speaking to him of Brian, and the extreme peril in which we considered ourselves from the occurrence of the preceding day, with the discovery of her being in the neighbourhood.



I therefore begged him to indulge me a few minutes longer, as it was necessary that he should be informed of that in which the family of Mulgrave at large were interested. As he was of course already acquainted with Brian's former delinquencies, he saw at once the importance of securing her, as well as the strong probability of her being the party who had fired into my cottage. When he further learnt that, in case of her being arrested at my instance, it would be necessary for me to appear against her, he said at once that he would take that part on himself, and also adopt measures for the future exemption of my cottage from her attacks.

He then hastily rose, and without any apparent pain at leaving me in so forlorn a condition, gave me a finger for his farewell, and hurried off.

Thus ended an interview that in its first moments had given rise to glowing hopes, which drooped and expired before he disappeared from the tearful gaze with which I watched him out of sight. It is difficult to satisfy the requirements of such poor as myself, who are more galled by the contumely of their former equals, than by the deprivations of poverty, and would rather forego a benefit coldly or haughtily rendered, than obtain it at the cost of wounded feelings.

But a shower of tears after my uncle's departure cleared my mental vision, and enabled me to see and to acknowledge that he had in reality been more kind than I could reasonably have expected him to be.

As we had taken measures for our safety, we lay down on this night with rather less anxiety than on the preceding. Before retiring, we let loose the dog, that we might further secure ourselves, by the exercise of his fine and faithful instincts in our defence. He had been, indeed, so restless under his chain from the first moment of the attack upon the cottage, that had we not feared for his life, we should have given him his liberty then. Now that he had obtained it, he seemed half frantic with delight ; running round the house in every direction, and snuffing the ground as he went, to find out the track of the enemy.

The moon was only in her first quarter, and the sky was

cloudy; but there was enough of light, as we examined appearances without, from an upper window, to discern any object that might have been in motion, but none was visible.

Rover's terrific voice, which must have been heard a long way off, as he dashed about in all directions, was of itself a protection.

We were happy enough on the following morning to find him unharmed, and reposing in his own house.

In the course of the day, I had a note from my uncle, to tell me that he was of opinion we had nothing more to fear from Margaret Brian; as before any legal authority could be made available against her, she had disappeared, under the alarming rumour, which had circulated like wildfire, that a process was being instituted to secure her person on an old charge of felony, and a new one of attacking a cottage by firing into it.

The currency which my uncle found it easy to give to this rumour would, he thought, be found sufficient to deter her from being again seen in our vicinity. Thus ended an alarm which, had it continued, must have entirely destroyed the tranquillity of our little household. As it was, indeed, we could not at once regain the same degree of security that we had been accustomed to feel previously.

But having done all that we could do, we felt that we might, without presumption, confide our future to the Almighty.

Rover, after this, was regularly installed as our nightly guard, and well did he perambulate our little territory and its neighbouring grounds, from the close until the dawn of the day; so that under his guardianship we enjoyed three months of undisturbed security.

The more we reflected on the probability that it was Brian who had fired into our cottage, the stronger was our belief in it.

She had always been a notorious zealot of her church, even in her early days, and an active and successful persecutor of Protestants, in proportion to the irresponsibility of her social position. She was, in fact, a true child of the Infallible Church—crafty and fatal in her machinations, and more dangerous than an individual who has either character or station to lose by the detection of an enormity.

## CHAPTER XX.

It was now the month of May—that sweetest and most inspiring season of the year—when the promises of hope are written on every smelling bud, and an atmosphere vital and buoyant wakes every sense to pleasure, and renders even our sighs rapturous.

Can it be, that the rushing joy of a world springing into new life, thus showered upon it by the Creator's own hand, is prepared only for material nature? May not the spirit of man drink of it and live? Are the movements of the sweet spring, in its opening leaves, and its soft tints, advancing daily to the perfection of beauty, to be contemplated without participation in their triumphs? The manifestation of that renovating power which, from analogy, promises so much to man, should lift him above the depressions of a transient life, and enable him to see, though afar off, his own future, radiated with the glorious hopes that are written on it. Yet, the first flush of this inspiration over, and *my* hopes evaporated in sighs; and exalted thoughts found a grave in earthly care—for to whatever point of the compass I sent an inquiring glance, the future was to me a barren waste—a wilderness of spectres—from which I was glad to shrink back, even on the perplexing, unsatisfying present.

Father Ossory was still in his usual health, living very much in the solitude of his own room, in far higher communion than that of earth, and awaiting his dismissal from it.

Although he never reviewed his earthly career but with sorrow for the unconscious error in which he had lived, yet he had attained to that peace with God which enabled him to rejoice in hope of a blessed future. He several times attempted a written protest against the errors and practices of the church which he had renounced; but his sight had lately failed him, and the state of his nerves made it impossible for him to pursue any subject closely.

I therefore prevailed upon him to relinquish this design, as I feared for the consequence to himself of his persisting in it.

On the evening of the fifteenth of May, he took a walk with my children and myself round our garden. The sun was still above the horizon, but declining fast; and its setting rays were strikingly beautiful. The sweet notes of some invisible bird, which sang amongst the trees, were so touching as to arrest my attention, and almost abstract me from the scene. The children plucked polyanthuses and lilies of the valley, and placed them in every button-hole of Father Ossory's coat within their reach; thus dressing him in flowers, and then dancing before him, delighted with their achievement and the gaiety of his appearance. He was unusually serious, and did not enter into the spirit of their frolics as he was accustomed to do, but seemed faint and abstracted.

I shortened our saunter, and returned with him to the house. After sitting about five minutes, he rose abruptly, and bade me and the children good night, kissing each of them, and begging them to take care of his bouquets, by putting them into water until the morning.

After he had dismissed the children, by giving them something to do, he asked me if I would take one more turn with him in the garden.

Of course I accompanied him; and when he found we were alone, he said to me, in an under-tone, 'Did you observe the notes of the bird that was singing while the children were dressing me in flowers?'

'Yes; I thought they were very sweet. But I fear the children prevented you from enjoying them.'

'I heard the song,' said he, almost in a whisper; 'it was my requiem.'

'Oh no, no, not yet!' said I.

'Ah, my friend! "The night is far spent—the day is at hand." Rejoice for me! Yet I have still much to say to you, and therefore I intend rising early in the morning. Will you be up at six?'

'Yes, certainly, if you wish it.'

'Oh! I would not die without telling you what I feel of gratitude, of anxiety, of hope, of fear for you. But I cannot talk now. May God Almighty bless you! I must go to rest.'



His thoughts seemed to wander, as he said to himself, 'Hark! they whisper; angels say, sister spirit, come away!' And then he quickened his step; while I, seeing him totter, endeavoured to assist him into the house. He bade me 'good night' at the foot of the stairs. I wished to help him up, but he would not permit it.

After the children had gone to bed, I conversed some time with Mary, who used to call the hour when she and I were left alone, 'her holiday.' On this occasion, we both shed tears in anticipation of an event, which I felt could not be far off.

At a late hour we retired softly to our different chambers. I lay long awake, and saw the dawn creeping in at the window before I fell asleep. Shortly after, I was again awake, and stealing with noiseless step to Father Ossory's chamber door, listened there awhile, to learn if he was stirring, or if I could hear any sound that might assure me of his welfare. But everything around us was as still as death.

I feared to open his door lest I might disturb him; and retreating to my own room, I lay down, and again fell asleep.

When I next awoke, I heard the sweet voices of the children, and Mary's quiet movements below. I arose immediately, and dressing myself hastily, hurried to Father Ossory's room. But all was still silent there; and I was reluctant, though it was now near eight, to tap at his door, and perhaps awake him from sleep, to ask how he was.

I awaited another half hour in my own room, and still hearing no movement in his, I tapped at his door. No answer—a second tap—and still no reply. I then softly opened the door, and could discern, as I stood at it, the extreme paleness of his face, as he lay in bed. Walking slowly to his bedside, I saw at once what I had feared—the angel of death had been there—his spirit had departed.

\* \* \* \* \*

Although the circumstances of the preceding evening had certainly prepared me to think his death might be near, yet I was not willing, when I saw it, to believe in my own prescience. Neither was I, as I ought to have been, prepared for the shock of the event. No; I stood breathlessly gazing, and wept, and

touched his cold hands, and marked his fine open forehead, now without its usual look of care, and his whole countenance, placid and tranquil as a face of marble. It was death.

On looking around the chamber, I observed that the customary refreshments which had been placed for him were untouched. But he had evidently been occupied after he had retired; for on a table in the middle of the room his writing desk was open, and on his dressing-table lay three small packages in writing paper. One of them was inscribed,—

‘For Frederic William Fitzgerald, a gift from his friend,

‘W. OSSORY.’

Another, ‘For Mary Walter, a gift from her friend,

‘W. OSSORY.’

The third, ‘For my funeral expenses, being all the money I have.’

Inside the package addressed to my son, which contained a gold watch of ancient workmanship, was a note in the following words :—

‘The enclosed watch was given me, more than sixty years since, by Marie Thérèse, Empress of Austria, as a mark of her approbation of a slight service which I, then a student in Vienna, had been so fortunate as to render her. As an ancient relic of a Royal personage so illustrious as the donor, I would fain hope it may not be wholly unacceptable to Frederic, although its pecuniary value is too insignificant to render it worthy of the grandson of Sir William Mulgrave.’ The packet addressed to Mary contained the silver watch of the donor, which he had been accustomed to wear constantly.

He must have wound it up before going to bed, as it was still ticking when we opened the parcel.

The third packet contained ten guineas. In a short note addressed to myself, which lay on his desk, and which was full of the most affecting acknowledgments, and earnest aspirations for my family at large, he begged that his funeral might be performed at the smallest possible cost; and that, if the ten guineas which he had left for that purpose should prove insufficient, the better part of his wardrobe might be sold to cover the deficiency. The remainder of his apparel he requested me to give

to the poor of the neighbourhood, in such proportions as I might think best.

There was a postscript at the end of the note in the following words:—

‘Time, or rather *eternity*, presses on me; and I had forgotten that I intended offering my books to you, my most kind and generous friend. I beg you to accept them, for it is, even at this solemn moment, a thought of passing pleasure, that your hands will sometimes turn over those pages on which mine have so often rested; and that the reasoning which once instructed me, or the delineations that delighted me, may have a similar effect on you. Farewell! I go to rest—perchance to meet you in the morning at six. Yet no; I shall not see another morning until that of the resurrection, for I am, even now, dying.

Strange that a harp of thousand strings  
Should keep in tune so long.’

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*            . \*

While his corpse remained in the house, it was distressing to observe the uneasiness of the children. They spoke to each other in whispers, and clung together even as they stood by my side. Nor was Mary or I, perhaps, less affected than they, by the feeling that death was again amongst us.

Severed as we were by our peculiar circumstances from the ordinary sympathy of neighbours and friends, the desolation of that consciousness became paralyzing. I found the only effectual mode of rousing myself from torpor, was to visit the corpse, and contemplate closely that which in absence so much affected my imagination. In these visits, the children never attempted to join me after having once seen the dead; nor do I think they recovered from the shock of that sight until after the funeral of the deceased.

We buried him on the afternoon of the twenty-first of May, in a small, obscure burying-ground, belonging to some Methodists in the neighbourhood, in which my two infants had been laid, about twelve months before. An itinerant minister of that most kind and pious sect performed the funeral service over the venerated dead; our little household comprising the only mourners that stood round his grave.

In the immediate vicinity of that grave was the small mound that covered my little infants, and which at that time was blooming with fragrant flowers that had been planted by Mary the preceding year, and since tended by my dear children.

When we returned home, we were greeted by Rover, who had been left to guard the cottage in our absence, with the most decided, though not boisterous joy. He seemed to understand the whole affair, having, like the children, so long as the corpse remained in the house, gone about with a dejected air, occasionally moaning as he met with anything that had belonged to the departed.

We were many days, and even weeks, before we were able to return to our ordinary pursuits with any feeling of interest in them; and as I reflected on the singular piety, amiability, and intelligence of our departed friend, I could not but feel that his loss to us, as an inmate, was real, and must be lasting.

It is true he had fallen, "Like a shock of corn, fully ripe in its season," and his death had been foreseen and expected. But this did not diminish our grief. The good are taken from the evil to come; and this was literally and strikingly true in Father Ossory's case. Nevertheless, I was not as resigned as I ought to have been to the event, for at the domestic altar we had sustained an irreparable loss, where his venerable form and serious countenance gave force to every sentiment and exhortation he uttered, and impressed his hearers with the reality of those invisible things, which, depicted by a less intelligent and earnest speaker, might have seemed but as words of course. Our distance from any Protestant place of worship had also rendered him invaluable to us as a minister of the Gospel, when, as our little group were wont to assemble round him on the Sabbath, the devotional feelings with which he was accustomed to inspire his auditors made me often exclaim, mentally, in fervour of feeling, 'Surely, this is none other but the House of God!' Now, we saw him no more in the arm-chair he had so often filled, and we listened in vain to catch the accents of affection that fell from his lips. But we knew the consoling fact, that although he would 'not return to us, we should go to him.'



## CHAPTER XXI.

IN looking into my pecuniary affairs now, at the end of my first year of widowhood and of poverty, I found that I had not duly estimated the cost of sustaining my family.

While Father Ossory lived, I continually put off the day of reckoning, apprehensive that the results might be so alarming as to cause me to betray to him the actual state of my position, which, as it was utterly out of his power to amend it, would have made him wretched.

Now, however, it was necessary that I should begin a new course, for I was in advance of my miserable pittance; and as my children's wants would be daily increasing, it was necessary that I should observe a more rigid economy than I had hitherto practised. How I should be able to provide for the future, was still more perplexing than for the present, as I had no prospect in life for my daughters, except I could teach them to live by their own exertions.

My eldest girl, Dora, was just seven years of age, and Caroline not yet six.

My youngest child, my son, already four and a half, was but nominally mine, and destined to be torn from me in the course of a few months. Yet so long as I saw him under my roof, and folded him in my arms, I was wont to cherish hope that that cruel destiny might yet be averted. If not, I dreaded to think of the consequences of seeing him borne away.

But as we have no prescience sufficient to inform us of what a day may bring forth, so we are not permitted to create phantom griefs, and incapacitate ourselves for present duty, by anticipations of future evil that may never arrive. Meanwhile, I read and wept, and prayed with my child, in labouring to give him scriptural ideas of God and divine truth, inducing thereby almost a precocity in such knowledge, which I well knew, like the forced plant of the hot-house, might perish under a single blast, by an untimely removal from its native soil and

atmosphere. Nevertheless, it was my duty to continue my labour, and though it was not in my power to mitigate the hardships which my son was now enduring on the very threshold of his existence, I hoped they might at least prove a salutary discipline for whatever lot awaited him.

After much painful rumination, I resolved on bringing up my daughters for private governesses. They were both very intelligent girls, and until a year ago had been instructed, so far as children of their age could be, by an English governess, and were sufficiently advanced in the elements of knowledge when they came out of her hands.

My son, also at four could read first books, and perform with ease those little tasks given to children of his age. I regret to say that during the past year very little progress had been made under my own tuition in book-knowledge; but I had taught them many practical and useful matters of fact, and had endeavoured to imbue them with common sense.

Ornamental education is often imposed on the young, before any foundation has been laid in the mind of useful and essential knowledge. I dreaded this course of proceeding with my children, as I was fearful of producing a result that might be fatal to their future success, in the sphere of life which I had chosen for them, and which might retard the development of that sound common sense, which can alone form a durable basis for every human acquirement. I wished also to avoid the common error in private education, of prematurely refining the character; as it appeared to me that refinement should be the natural offspring of taste, and not the graft of cultivation. And for the very humble sphere in which *my* children were destined to move, to aim at refinement would have been a cruel error; as all courage, short of moral heroism, must be insufficient to render their career successful, and fence off from them the innumerable lacerations incident to their destined profession.

I had already lost much time in the process of preparation; and before I could proceed further, without interruption, it was necessary that the amount of my future family expenditure should be reduced to rule.

Mary, who had originally been brought up somewhat

delicately, and whose occupation as a lady's maid had been of the lightest kind of labour, had, since we had been living at the cottage, voluntarily assumed, and succeeded in performing, all kinds of household work with the most admirable nicety. For this she had received no higher wages than heretofore; but even this amount, if she remained with me, I should be obliged to reduce. As this was a species of injustice against which my mind strongly revolted, I found it for many days impossible to speak of it. At length, I explained to her my pecuniary difficulty, requesting her to take her own time, but to seek another situation, in which she would be more worthily recompensed for her valuable services.

When I had given utterance to this proposal, it proved so barbarous an outrage both on my own feelings and on poor Mary's, as almost to create a scene.

For myself, overpowered by conflicting fears and emotions, I nearly fainted.

Mary, more heroic or less responsible, though she wept, declined, with great modesty but with immovable firmness, my proposal to part with her. It was useless to remonstrate; she had determined, she said, never to leave me until the wheel of fortune came round; and of this she was so sure, that with genuine credulity, which often assumes the character of prescience, she perpetually told her dreams and accumulated omens to cheer my spirits and convert me to her faith. It would have been an insult to urge any further, on so generous a creature, a point of interest.

I therefore forbore to do so; and constructed my plans for the future upon the certainty of her remaining with me.

The daily education of the children became henceforth an absorbing occupation for me; while Mary took upon her the whole management and labour of household affairs. The sum on which we were all to be subsisted was so limited, that only the extremest frugality could enable me to live without debts.

We reduced ourselves to the coarsest fare, which, though at first a great trial, and often productive of languor and suffering, was persevered in until the difficulty was conquered; and my children became such little philosophers as to be almost per

suaded that pain was no evil, or at least, that the pleasure of conquering themselves was greater than the pain attending the conflict. My heart tasted again of pleasure as I discerned the development of their faculties, and saw principles taking root in their hearts which I considered more valuable than an inheritance. Stripped as they were of what should have been their hereditary possessions, I persuaded myself that I was placing within their reach a species of wealth far more their own, and less accessible to the accidents of fortune, than that which they had lost, when I taught them experimentally that internal power over themselves, which is the most precious of all attainments.

I found the instruction of my children a labour of infinite rewards; and could I have made any provision for them that would have survived myself, I should now have enjoyed content, in spite of the meanness of my condition. But to know that if I were removed, my dear and innocent children might sink down to companionship with the paupers of the land, was a contingency I could not endure to look on; and yet it was ever in my thoughts. It was thus I was perpetually haunted with anxieties; and while cherishing and recording my griefs, my unregistered joys took flight and were forgotten.

But all is not bitterness even in poverty; there are sources of pleasure over which it has no empire, else were its iron hand as deadly to the soul as to the sense. The companions of my retreat never failed me, whether I speak of the little circle that formed my domestic society, or of the philosophers and poets that graced my rustic shelves. Nevertheless, when, after another year of pecuniary experiment—of laborious exertion and life-destroying privations—I found myself again in debt, I was plunged into despair.

I found, upon looking into my affairs, that I could no longer retain even my little cottage; and the two years of experiment which I had made in the education of my daughters convinced me that, in a place so remote from masters, it would be impossible to give them those accomplishments, even had my income been adequate to doing so, which were necessary to prepare them for their future lot in life. It was impossible that I could make any additional retrenchment where I was, without endan-



gering the health of my family. It therefore became a matter of necessity that we should remove to some less expensive locality. But whither? Ah! what a dreadful question is this for any human being who has no pecuniary resource adequate to his wants!

Had I possessed at this time any industrial art by which I could honestly have gained money, I should have blessed the hour that disclosed it, whatever effort it had exacted of me. But of anything of this sort I was as ignorant as my children themselves.

In this moment of extreme anxiety I received a communication from the executors, reminding me that my son was nearly five years of age, and that the day was close at hand when it would be necessary to remove him from my protection, in pursuance of his father's will. 'It was their intention,' they added, 'to place him at once in the Irish College at Paris, where he would receive an education suitable to the church in which he was born, and to his future prospects in life.'

The sword which had so long been suspended over me, had then, at last, fallen!

That I survived this shock was, perhaps, owing to a sudden thought, which, after some moments of agony, darted into my brain, and which was nothing less than that I would follow my child to Paris! Could any mother do less than this for her only son, and the heir of her house? But how accomplish such a purpose? The unavoidable expense of the experiment seemed at the first glance insuperable, as it would be impossible to create adequate funds, but by sacrifices so great as to absorb everything of disposable value which remained to me; leaving no resource for any future emergency, how urgent soever it might prove.

But to watch over my child, and occasionally to see him, though bereft of all power to serve him, was surely an object of sufficient importance, not only to him but to his sisters to justify the sacrifice of every hoarded superfluity.

Deliberate thought, it is true, showed me the perilousness of thus transporting myself and daughters to a foreign land; but though I shuddered in contemplating the experiment, I did not

abandon it. There had once, indeed, been sentiments associated with France which made its very name dear to me; but these had been effaced by the tears of many years, and I now only thought of it as the place which would henceforth contain my son. I should be an alien in Paris, and my lot would thus be cast among strangers. But what mattered it? Was I not a stranger in my own land, and is not 'the poor man,' everywhere, 'separated from his neighbor?'

I had, it is true, one relative in Paris; but it was not very likely that he would recognise me in the lowliness of my present condition. Yet there was a feeling of security in knowing that one of my own blood would be near me, though I must never approach him.

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When, at length, my child had been actually wrenched from me, I reasoned, I hesitated no more; and every lion that had hitherto been in my way, disappeared before the impetuous impulse with which, sleeping and waking, my heart followed him, and I entered upon my preparations for departure with a sort of desperate energy.

But although every impediment seemed thus removed by the ardour of my own purpose, there was still one, which though last considered, had ever been first in my heart—viz., the unavoidable dismissal of my excellent Mary. Not to wound her unnecessarily, I made her the confidant and the judge, both of my embarrassments and my projects; and as her feelings were almost as deeply interested in the welfare of my children as my own, she perfectly acquiesced in the decision I had formed; and to lessen my anxiety at the responsibility incurred by it, she reminded me of all the possible advantages which might arise from our removal; and in her quiet modest way, enumerated the benefits that must accrue to my daughters from an education in Paris.

She had already spent all her earnings in my service, or nothing could have deterred her from accompanying us, at her own cost. As it was, this proof of her attachment was impracticable, and she buried her regrets in her own heart in silence, that she might not augment mine.

It was not until I had sold both my furniture and plate, that I found it would be necessary also to dispose of the jewelry and trinkets that still remained to me. After these steps had been taken, it was too late to retreat. But when I found that everything I possessed had been actually disposed of, and no reserve made for any of the contingencies of a perilous experiment, fears and misgivings began again to haunt my pillow, and phantoms of distress to people my dreams. I found it necessary to call up in review every encouraging circumstance that might enable me to sustain the responsibility I had imposed on myself. If I asked the opinion of others, it was in the hope they would applaud my project, rather than remind me of the possibility of its failure—for on this I dared not trust myself to think.

I was quitting my own dear native land, and my family connexions. But what were my connexions to me?—me! whom as a heretic they had cast away as a withered branch from my family tree, and whose very existence many of them seemed to have forgotten. On the Continent I had a mother and sister; and though, like me, they were fettered by the iron hand of poverty, yet, by lessening the distance between us, was I not rendering it possible for me to meet them once more on earth? My two bachelor uncles were men of fortune, who, though they had yet shown no kindness to me, and very little to my mother and sister since my father's death, might, perchance, bestow on my sweet and blooming children that recognition from which my humiliations had debarred myself.

It was thus I endeavoured to fortify my courage, and keep alive hopes of success, which fluctuated with every varying hue of a changing sky.

Until my child had actually been transported to Paris, I thought it not prudent to suffer my intention of following him thither to transpire. I have reason, therefore, to believe that the Jesuit was taken by surprise when I wrote a note to apprize him of it, and to request an introduction to the Governor of the College, in proof of my identity, that I might occasionally be admitted to see my child, and satisfy myself of his welfare. The Jesuit's reply was, perhaps, such as I ought to have expected, but I was not prepared for the full extent of its bar-

barity. He called on me, and coolly told me, that knowing the passionate fondness of my maternal feelings, he had deemed it necessary to provide for the child's future welfare by placing an effectual barrier to my intercourse with him, except by letter.

He presumed not, he said, to suggest any advice respecting my own movements; although, as one of my husband's executors, he could not but desire to see me sustain a deportment suitable to my own superior character, and the dignity of my family and connexions.

I made him no reply; and, seeing me thus inflexible to his admonitions, he quitted me abruptly.

Instantly after his departure, I wrote to a maternal relative, whose ancestors had, some sixty years since, given large bequests to the Irish College in Paris, in virtue of which their descendants were entitled to certain privileges in their admission to it. My son was, of course, one of those descendants; and I hoped to learn that this fact might obtain for me the desired occasional interview with him.

My relative replied, that as a parent himself, he could well understand a parent's feelings for so young a child. But he feared that my secession from the Romish church might prove an insurmountable barrier to the indulgence sought; especially as it would be, if granted, a violation of the condition imposed on the college by the executors.

Nevertheless, he added, 'I will furnish you with a letter of identity, which may do something for you, and if you be able to get it signed also by your two maternal uncles, the baron at Vienna and the count at Paris, you may possibly obtain your object, although perhaps under stringent conditions.'

As I knew the influence which my two uncles on the Continent possessed with the officials of the college, I thought myself now in possession of a document that might counteract the influence of the Jesuit.

I therefore entered, with something like hope, upon my final arrangements for my journey, in a small and wretched apartment in the town of —, my cottage having been resigned to another tenant. Let not my reader suppose that, while I was taking counsel of myself and my few friends, I omitted to ask



counsel of God. To what purpose are our efforts to learn and to do his will, if we seek not his divine aid, and obtain not of him by supplication, that inspiration, so undefinable, so imperceptible, yet so certain, that, like the dew on the grass, it fertilizes and sustains the tender blade, which yet exhibits no recognisable proof of its influence.

The expenses incurred in the lodging which I occupied had not been foreseen, and were therefore not included in my estimates; and as I was unexpectedly detained here a fortnight, I had reason to fear that this drain on the little fund provided for my adventurous journey, might hereafter prove a serious inconvenience to me. But there was no avoiding this expense, or many others not foreseen. Postage at this time was a formidable cost to the poor; and those to whom I had occasion to write, had no idea that the cost of a letter could be an amount not only to inconvenience, but to embarrass me.

A day or two before our departure, I visited with my children the graves of our household. I had been obliged to leave those of Father Ossory and my infant children without a memorial to indicate their locality; but how gratifying soever it would have been to me to erect such memorials, it would in my circumstances have been a robbery of the living for the dead. Without the indication of a tomb-stone, however, we found both graves sufficiently marked and defended, by the groups of flowers growing on them, of which the children gathered a large nosegay from the infants' grave, to strew on the tomb of their father. Precious children! In the filial sentiments they cherished for him, of whom they knew nothing, they were at once dutiful and happy. The humble grave of the infants, and the splendid tombs of their father and uncle, were some miles apart; but we accomplished a visit to each. Although I had visited the latter, from a feeling that it was a due which I owed to the dead, previous to what might prove a final banishment from my country, I suffered so much in the fulfilment of it, from the retrospects which it naturally awakened, that I regretted the infliction I had imposed on myself.

It was not grief or tenderness that filled my soul, but a chaos of thoughts, appalling as the spectres of the dead, and revolting

to every instinct of my nature. Alas! I fear they were but impulses of resentment, and that I was not yet subdued to resignation. But nothing creates so much bitterness of heart as a long continued and unsuccessful struggle with the difficulties of a position into which we have been impelled by the coercion of authority.

As I meditated over my uncle's ashes, now harmless as the dust under my feet, I gazed around for some attesting relic of that resistless power which had wrenched me from the fairest prospects and the dearest ties, to hurl me into an abyss of misery! But it was nowhere recognisable, except in the debasement of my own condition. I had passed, as had been scornfully foreshadowed, 'from the palace to the hovel,' spite of the costly sacrifice which had been made at my own expense to avert such a fate! Now, the arbiter of my destiny lay in nothingness, within the marble that enshrined him, unconscious alike of himself and of her whose feelings of grief and destitution were wild enough to evoke compassion from the senseless tenant of his tomb.

If I felt bitterly, as I hung over that tomb, it was that my sorrows traced themselves to him as their source, and my shuddering fear of the future was at that moment stronger than reason, for I was not fancifully, but actually adrift, with two children, on the stormy sea of Adventure. Bound thus to the unknown, and far-off port of Subsistence, without compass to guide, or rudder to steer my frail bark, it was already pitching about, amidst rocks on one hand and shoals on the other; while the clouds and darkness that hung over my horizon obscured the future and bewildered my senses.

I returned to my lodging weary and sick at heart, and found a letter there from my uncle Sir Felix, in answer to a farewell which I had addressed to him and my aunt. It informed me that my aunt was suffering from a mortal disease, and was so ill as to require constant attendance both night and day.

He added, that her personal attendants, as it annoyed her to have strangers about her, had been for some time so perpetually with her as to be nearly worn out. As I had been exerting myself in vain in Ireland, to get Mary into a family of distinc-

tion, I wrote to my uncle by return of post, to beg that he would allow her to come to Hanover Square, where I pledged myself she would prove a treasure to my aunt.

My proposal was promptly assented to, and I had the satisfaction in this arrangement of securing for Mary all that I could desire, and at the same time of gratifying her affectionate heart by continuing her in the family. She was speedily ready for her new undertaking, but resolved on not setting out for London, so long as there was anything which she could do for us. She therefore remained to assist our departure.

Rover was left in her care, and my uncle had given her permission to bring him with her to his house, together with whatever else I might wish to entrust to his care.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

At length the moment of departure arrived ; but the parting with Mary had nearly proved fatal to my fortitude: the affectionate creature had pined herself ill beforehand. After we had mounted the vehicle which was to convey us away, she hung on the door of it, crying so bitterly that no one had resolution to remind her she was detaining the carriage. The long-patient driver was at length obliged to use gentle force, to disengage her from her hold. We heard her voice for many minutes after we had moved off, and saw her slender figure rivetted to the spot where we had left her, with her hands in an attitude of invocation, until a turn in the road rendered her no longer visible.

I then sank back in the carriage, almost annihilated by the griefs and fears that came rushing on my heart like a torrent. It was in vain I endeavoured to throw them off ; the whole project, at that moment, seemed like an outrage on myself, and the children still left, and still so dear to me. I thought all was lost. and that by a presumptuous stake of things which should have been sacred in my eyes, and exempt from experiment, I had cast

away the last consolation of my heart—that of not having been the author of my own and my children's wretchedness.

The enterprise in which I had engaged required a sternness of fortitude that was scarcely in my nature. Yet now, at the moment of commencing it, the ordinary courage of my mind failed me. But I was carried on, in spite of myself, to plunge into untried exile.

Our first stage was to Cork, where I parted, perhaps for ever, with my dear native land, whose every grain of earth and weed on the highway became precious in my eyes as I gazed on them for the last time. Ireland—beloved and beautiful—farewell! Thy history, like mine, is but a record of suffering. Oh, when will the sun of happiness dawn on thee or on me!

We reached Bristol by steam. Everything in England was new to me; but my attention would not be arrested by anything short of my final destination, otherwise I could not have gazed on the scenery of the Avon, as we sailed up that river to Clifton, without admiration.

We went from Bristol to Southampton, and thence by steam to Havre. The heavens certainly smiled on our landing in France, and I seized on this circumstance as a happy omen; for 'trifles light as air' are sometimes ministers of hope or despair.

Although I had slept while crossing the Channel, I had no difficulty in believing, when I first beheld the quay and streets of Havre from the deck of the boat, that I was looking on a foreign land. Parrots screaming at open doors and windows; *gens d'armes* stationed at every turn; and women moving about the streets without hats or bonnets, in high Normandy caps, with long lappets, convinced me of this to demonstration. I had, nevertheless, some difficulty in persuading myself that this was France—that country once the theatre of my youthful dreams, and the Arcadia of my imagination.

Often as I had seen it in my mind's eye, and familiar as I had fancied myself with its peculiarities, a single glance falsified all my conceptions of it, and convinced me that no description can impart to the mind adequate and accurate ideas of a country we have never seen.

Havre did not interest me; and having passed through the



formalities of the custom-house without impediment, we embarked on the day after our arrival, in the steamboat *La Duchesse d'Angoulême*, for Rouen. Fanned by gentle gales, and sailing under skies of benignant aspect, everything around me fostered the hope that at least I had not committed a fatal error in throwing myself and family on the chances of a foreign land.

The scenery of the Seine is beyond description beautiful and varied, and almost inspired me with a feeling of pleasure. The great features of nature, like those of man, are everywhere similar, and the eternity of mountains and valleys speaks to us in a language which the soul can everywhere understand, while it proclaims truths which we discern and reverence.

The sympathy that exists between nature and the soul is more cordial than that betwixt man and man. To this benign and silent listener we unfold our deepest and most passionate griefs; and though she answers not with condolences, she beholds our tears without reproaching our weakness, infuses peace into the troubled breast, and when we sink under our sorrows, receives us into her bosom, and blends our being with her own.

We reached Rouen late in the evening, and the interval of repose which during our passage I had stolen from habitual anxiety, vanished before the crowd that rushed on board the boat as it reached the quay.

I encountered at Rouen, as everywhere else, a thousand difficulties and inconveniences incident to my inexperience, my poverty, and the unprotectedness of my condition; but these I pass over, as well as the impertinences, not the smallest of my trials, to which I was exposed from the youthfulness of my appearance.

On the following evening I pursued my journey to Paris by *diligence*, and arrived there at mid-day. Notwithstanding the fatigue attendant on travelling every day, and the weariness of my spirit, the beauty of the approach to Paris by the *Barrière de l'Etoile* could not fail to arrest and absorb, for the moment, every faculty.

A refreshing rain, which had fallen during the night, had so renovated both fields and foliage, that in the morning they looked as fresh as in the early spring.

Scenes of beauty were everywhere around me ; but when, after quitting Nanterre, we were placed by a sudden turn of the road in full view of that imposing object, the Barrière de l'Etoile, at the extremity of an avenue some miles in length, my admiration was unbounded.

The vehicle stopped as we arrived at the barrière for the customary examination ; it was but the business of an instant, and then driving swiftly through the gateway—we were in Paris. Paris ! What a thousand undefinable thoughts came over me as I uttered the name, and first raised my eyes to its domes and steeples, holding their lofty heads in sunbeams. Not such sunbeams as those even of our dear little Emerald Isle ; but bright and golden rays unclouded by smoke or fog. The visions of years were in an instant realized ; and could I have taken account of myself at such a moment, I had described feelings as new as the scenes before me.

Whether I gazed on the objects of nearer interest in the Avenue de Neuilly and the Champs Elysées, or, looking onwards, desisted in the distance the forest of trees which indicated the garden of the Tuileries, all was enchantment. As we passed by the Place Louis Quinze, other objects broke in succession on my view ; and the chamber of Deputies, with its contiguous edifices on the south of the Seine, were, as we drove rapidly on, instantly exchanged for a near view of the noble west gate of entrance to the Tuileries,—the horses in white marble by which it was at this period surmounted, wild with animation, and almost leaping from their pedestals, forming a fine contrast to the automaton figures of the Swiss guards on duty below. It struck me that, for the first time in my life, I beheld city views which more than equalled in beauty the pictures that are made of them.

The artist, by his command of light and shade, and clear atmosphere, and cloudless skies, often throws a degree of beauty over his delineations which destroys resemblance, and excites anticipations that make a mockery of truth. But here, the original surpassed its fairest copy, looking like a land of glorious dreams. Ah ! little knew I then how much I was destined both to suffer and to enjoy in this region of romance !

My dream of delight was soon at an end. We were driven rapidly through the streets, and set down in the yard of the *Messagerie Royale*. When I found myself and my little girls surrounded and gazed upon by a crowd of strangers, whose language, though I thought myself a tolerable French scholar, was enunciated with a rapidity that rendered it, at first, unintelligible to my distracted senses, I would gladly have shrunk away out of sight.

And as, on a hasty glance over the group around us, I discerned not a single face that I could recognise, nor amongst the many voices a single tone of welcome to me, a shivering feeling of fear came over me that was almost paralysing. My children looked anxiously and askingly in my face, as I endeavoured to collect my thoughts, and decide on the locality to which I should direct my steps.

I was lost in these thoughts as I stood by my luggage and them, assailed by a dozen porters at once, demanding whither I would have the luggage carried. They endeavoured to understand my wishes, but without success; for although I spoke to them in their own language, my timidity and my foreign accent rendered me unintelligible.

They then quarrelled with each other, and the rival candidates for my favour increased in number. I looked around me in despair, and saw at a short distance, standing in the yard, a respectably and somewhat fashionably dressed female, gazing on me with an intensity of look that startled me. But the instant my eyes met hers, she turned away, and my attention being at the moment diverted, I lost sight of her.

In the hope of finding some one among the clerks in the coach-office who might be able to speak to me intelligibly, I entered it, and looking round, thought myself fortunate in perceiving an Englishman.

Of course I addressed myself to him in preference. Having gained his ear, he bestowed on me, in reply, that sort of supercilious, examining look with which Englishmen of his class are accustomed to greet a stranger of dubious rank who requests their civilities. Having surveyed me and my children from head to foot, and I presume found our exterior below his standard of

*gentility*, he answered my inquiries in a vague and negligent manner, so as to afford me no assistance whatever. Meanwhile, one of the French clerks, who had been attending to what was passing, politely addressed me, and inquired of what I wished to be informed.

I made him understand, and he instantly desired a porter to lift my luggage into the office; and having superintended the placing of it, told me that it should be taken care of until I sent for it. The Englishman, unabashed by the reproof which had been given him in the Frenchman's superior courtesy, smiled affectedly, and went on with his business of the quill.

I then left the coach-yard, and trod for the first time the streets of Paris. I was in possession of the address of but one person in Paris besides my uncle; and to the residence of this person I now anxiously made my way, hoping that, as she was in an humble rank of life, she might be induced to accommodate me and my children, at least for the moment. I had obtained directions to find the street of her residence from the obliging clerk of the coach-office. It was at a considerable distance from the Rue Notre Dame, in which we had been set down, but having purchased a map of Paris on my way, I had little difficulty in finding it.

Having done so, however, my distress was indescribable on finding the person I sought absent from home, and not expected to return for several months. It would have been madness for me to incur the expenses of a public hotel; and it was impossible that I could present myself and family, uninvited and unknown, at the hôtel of my uncle, the Count de Carryfort, who belonged to a class in society which admitted not of such a freedom.

I clasped my hands in bitter agony, as I turned from the porter's lodge of the house in which I had sought, and hoped to have found shelter.

We had been travelling the preceding night, and for many days had been irregularly supplied with meals, and my children looked wretchedly pale and ill. We were in the Rue St. Honoré, near the Rue Royale. The shops of the restaurateurs and confectioners presented their inviting viands at the win-



dows; but I dared not enter them, as I had no money to spare, although the looks with which my children surveyed them touched me to the heart. A few biscuits was all I could afford them. For myself, I could not eat a morsel; a corroding sense of anxiety had taken possession of me, which superseded hunger.

The day, which in September is not long, was wearing fast away, and what might become of us, should night come on before we had found an asylum, was a question which I asked with such vehemence of terror as frightened my children, and caused the elder, who was old enough to feel something of its import, to burst into a fit of crying, that increased my own distress. I knew not which way to turn in the street, but was obliged to move on, as our appearance attracted attention from the passers by; and a crowd was forming round us just as we approached the church of the 'Assumption.' Its doors were open, and terrified to an excessive degree, I took refuge in it with my children.

As I approached into the interior of the building, I observed a few humble worshippers devoutly kneeling on the pavement.

The sight of them inspired a feeling of devotion in my own heart that was irrepressible. They, like me, were perhaps in sorrow, and 'had no comforter;' but, 'God is no respecter of persons,' and he is everywhere 'waiting to be gracious.' Their garb, denoting even greater poverty than mine, awakened sympathy in my heart, and quieted the murmurs of my spirit. I retired to a deep recess, and prostrating myself on the floor with my children, poured out the sorrows of my heart in a torrent of tears and supplication.

Happiest of all human privileges is *that*, which in the day of trouble permits us to call upon God!

I left the church with a composure of mind, which I have always found to succeed sincere and fervent devotion. As my children and I descended the steps, I observed the same female whom I had seen in the *cour* of the Messagerie, and again her gaze was fixed on me. I returned her look; and thought, as I examined her features, there was something Irish about them.

Occupied, however, with my own feelings, I was turning

from her, when she abruptly approached me, and uttered my name.

My surprise was very great, as I was sure she was a stranger to me. But in such a moment of isolation, only to hear my name uttered was a circumstance to cause emotion. The reflection of an instant caused me to recoil, until the stranger mentioned the name of one of my Dnblin relatives, and informed me at the same time, that she was acquainted with him. The pre-occupied state of my mind prevented me from discerning at the moment the extreme singularity of this rencontre, and the seeming interest of a stranger in my concerns.

Miss Murphy, for that was her name, nothing revolted by my shrinking manner, inquired if I had engaged lodgings; to which I replied that I had not, and that I should be much obliged to her if she could recommend me to any that were suitable for me. Miss Murphy appeared to ponder for a moment on my request, and then, with an air of hesitation, said,—‘Perhaps my mother might be able to recommend you to some place. Our residence is not far distant, and if you will favour me with your company thither, I shall be most happy to introduce you to her. You will find her a countrywoman of your own.’

As we passed along, I learned that she was acquainted with the whole history of my family; and through her correspondence with Ireland, as she said, she had been apprized of everything that had befallen myself.

She was making an attempt at condolence when we stopped at the gate of an hotel in the Rue St. Florentin. She conducted us through a gloomy court-yard, and up a staircase equally gloomy, of which I thought I should never reach the top. The exertion was so painful to me, that I was obliged repeatedly to stop and take breath, while the children were amusing themselves with pointing out to each other the cobwebs and dirt on the walls and stairs. We at length stopped at a little low door, on the fifth story. It was opened at the ring of a bell, and passing through a small antechamber, we were carried through a suite of three or four rooms, very showily furnished. We were requested to seat ourselves in the last, and Miss Murphy left us alone—when, casting my eyes on a brilliant clock on the man-

tel-piece, I perceived that it was already four o'clock, and as there were only two more hours of daylight, my impatience for the return of my conductress became extreme. She re-appeared, with her mother on her arm.

Mrs. Murphy was a tall woman, about sixty years of age, with a daring, haughty countenance, and an imperious carriage, that bestowed something of dignity on mean and negligent attire. She approached me with an air of graciousness, as if it were her object to conciliate me ; while a look of rude scrutiny, from a pair of prominent black eyes, made me quail before her.

I checked my rising repugnance, and addressed to her the same inquiry as that which I had already addressed to her daughter.

Without replying to me, she continued surveying me and my children, with so sinister and calculating an expression of countenance, that it was a relief to me when she proposed retiring to consult her daughter.

They withdrew together, and I was again left to survey the apartment, and form vague surmises respecting the apparent incongruity betwixt it and its occupants. •

During their absence, my anxiety respecting where we were to find shelter for the night again returned in all its agony, and I felt a momentary wish to remain where we were ; yet dreaded lest they should propose it, for a strong and singular repugnance to both mother and daughter had taken possession of me. They were aware of my reduced circumstances, and had mentioned that they personally knew the Count de Carryfort. All this was very unaccountable to me ; and, while I was bewildering myself with conjectures, they returned with smiling faces, and, with an air of doing me a great favour, proposed that I should remain with them, until I could be more suitably accommodated. I had but a moment to decide,—for hesitation, I clearly saw, would be an offence, and the thought, where else shall I find a shelter for the night ? induced me to accept this offer with as much courtesy as I could command.

They took care to remark, that although they were on the fifth story, there was still a floor betwixt them and the roof, and that in Paris the higher stories were considered more healthy,

and quite as *genteel* as the lower. This remark did not interest me, or I should have smiled at its attempt to dupe me. I felt an almost invincible repugnance, without being able to account for it, to becoming an inmate with Mrs. Murphy and her daughter. But my situation admitted not of the indulgence of fastidious feeling; it was a case of necessity, which abrogated even the ordinary laws of prudence; and having once made up my mind to it, I dismissed all my fears, in commending myself to Divine protection.

Mrs. Murphy had proposed terms which I could not object to. They were, indeed, much lower than I had expected, though still not low enough for my limited resources.

A porter was speedily despatched for my luggage, and at six o'clock we were summoned to dinner. As this was my first introduction to domestic life in Paris, and I was utterly unacquainted with the usages of any class of its inhabitants, I paid some attention to the quality and arrangement of the dinner.

It was composed of very inferior and ill-cooked food, served with an affectation of ceremony that to me seemed ludicrous; as did also the now gaudy apparel of the mother and daughter, from whom I eagerly escaped, as soon as propriety would allow me, to the chamber appropriated to my use.

Had I been less absorbed in serious cares, I should have found this chamber dreary and comfortless in the extreme. It was a large room, and the discoloured walls and ceiling, from which hung cobwebs of all lengths and breadths, implied that it must have been unoccupied many months, if not years. A small casement window, so thick with accumulated dust as to render a blind superfluous, and a dark and dirty floor, that seemed not to have been either washed or polished for years, presented a striking contrast to the glittering furniture that I had observed in the salons.

I became gloomily perplexed by the strangeness and want of congruity that evidently reigned throughout the establishment.

But as yet I knew not what to ascribe to local peculiarity, and what to individual taste. A few weeks explained some of the mysteries of the place. I had long been accustomed to the com-



fortlessness of poverty, or the wretched beds destined to our use would have produced anything but repose.

But we were all too weary to be sensible of our privations ; and our sleep for the first night, at least, was sweet.

On the following day, by bringing into use a few articles which I had brought from home, I was enabled to improve our accommodations.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

I WAS now, then, at last in Paris, and for the moment in sufficient quiet to take a survey of my position, my resources, and my principal object in coming there, and I lost neither time nor effort in endeavouring to expedite its attainment.

As I had provided myself with vouchers to attest my identity, and substantiate the claims of my family on the college, I wanted but the signatures of my two uncles to render them perfectly presentable.

For that of the Count de Carryfort, it was necessary that I should apply in person. Not to alarm him by an abrupt intrusion, I addressed a note to him, informing him of my intended visit, and the object of it. Although I had every imaginable claim on my uncle, and nothing had ever occurred to produce alienation betwixt us, my note was answered with a coldness bordering on incivility. All recognition of our relationship was carefully avoided, and my request for his signature granted only on condition that I should not importune him for anything more.

My heart swelled with emotion on the first reading of this note in a foreign land, but my indignation was transient, and I quickly sank into that submission which long continued suffering and repeated disappointment had rendered almost habitual. I had not now to learn that the mere want of assistance is insufficient to obtain it. Nevertheless, my uncle's unkindness deprived me of one of the few remaining resources on which my mind, in speculating on future disasters, had been wont to rest.

I accepted his signature to my Irish testimonial on the condition prescribed, without being admitted to an interview with him, and was thus prevented from making such inquiries respecting the Murphys as he could only have satisfied, since I knew no other person in Paris to whom they were known—if indeed they were known to him, a point which must now remain in doubt.

Before I could proceed a step further in obtaining access to the college, I was obliged to apply to the Murphys for such information as only a resident well acquainted with Paris could furnish. I thus unavoidably revealed to them my anxiety respecting my son, which it had been better to conceal; although indeed I soon found that every attempt at concealing my personal circumstances and anxieties was utterly useless, as, by some unaccountable means, they obtained information of the precise posture of my affairs, and appeared to know almost every intended movement and project of my thoughts. Yet I could never discover that my locks had been forced, or that any of my papers were missing. I had written to my uncle at Vienna, and, through my dear mother's interposition, had obtained from him an attested document, in aid of that which I had brought from Ireland, and was then enabled by the assistance of the Murphys, which I afterwards found to be treacherous, to present my testimonials to the president of the Irish College, who, having examined them, admitted they were entitled to investigation.

With what anxiety did I await the result of that investigation! Meanwhile, 'thick-coming fears of fondness' often represented my child as languishing for want of a mother's care; and I wandered round and round the walls that I supposed to enclose him, silently invoking protection and blessings on him.

I lost much time in importuning the college officials for the decision, which I supposed would have been immediate, and for permission in the interim to behold my child, if it were but for a moment.

I was at length informed, in reply to my entreaties, that circumstances of a formidable, and, it was feared, of an insurmountable character, had been laid before the council, which

rendered it a duty on their part to interdict any intercourse betwixt me and my son.

Nevertheless, it was added, that being unwilling to decide hastily, they had resolved on deferring any further consideration of the case, and even to wave any mention of what formed the impediment to my wishes, unless the Count de Carryfort should personally interest himself in an application for it.

I was quite aware that this amounted to a decided negation of my suit, unless I could prevail on my uncle to comply with the condition prescribed. But how might I find courage again to intrude upon him with a petition. In debating this question, I discovered that all I had hitherto suffered had been ineffectual to empty my heart of its native pride.

It was bitterness and gall, after my uncle's interdiction, in which I had tacitly acquiesced, to endeavour again to force myself upon his notice. But there was no alternative, unless I relinquished altogether the only object that had brought me to Paris.

I had never seen my uncle, which increased the difficulty of applying to him; nor was it possible for me to think of the unkindness of so near a relation, without great diffidence of myself, and a desponding appreciation of that personal influence with which I was to attempt obtaining his sympathy in my maternal griefs. I recollected having once been told that the count resembled my mother. This recollection heightened the dread I had of encountering him; for how could I endure disdain from a countenance resembling my mother's? Yet this dreaded visit must be made. As I arrived at this conviction, I made instant preparation for it, and was soon on my way to the Rue d'Anjou.

When I reached the count's hotel, the saddest apprehensions filled my heart; and on hearing from the porter that his master was at home, I was seized with a panic that almost induced me to run away without my errand. Nevertheless, I suffered myself to be led to a superb saloon, in which, as the servant shut the door, I found myself alone. As I caught a glimpse of my pale and terrified face in one of the large mirrors that hung on the walls, I thought it must of itself insure my failure, for it was

so ghastly as to startle myself. I chose first one seat, then another, endeavouring in vain to put myself at ease. Too soon I heard approaching footsteps; and starting up, ran forward, not knowing what I did, and met a gentleman near the door, as it was thrown open by a servant to admit him. One glance told me who he was, and I exclaimed, with irrepressible emotion, 'My uncle!'

Before he could reply, I had thrown myself at his feet, and seizing one of his hands, unconsciously bathed it with the tears that happily came to my relief.

A brief explanation followed, for I had omitted giving my name to the servant. But my uncle, in his turn, had recognised lineaments, which he frankly owned were not to be mistaken. I had, however, taken him by surprise, and thrown him off his guard; and his second thoughts, I instantly perceived, had made an offence of this freedom. He disengaged his hand, and desiring me to rise, motioned me to a seat.

'You are Mrs. Fitzgerald, I presume, madam, from whom, some weeks since, I received a note, whose request I promptly complied with, but on one condition which, I think, your presence here has violated. I know not what your business may be in Paris, madam; it is a long way from Ireland, for an unprotected woman to come with a family of children, and your *début* in this gay city has been made under dubious circumstances. I presume not, however, to call you to account. I am not invested with any right to do so; and you must consider what I have said rather as a soliloquy extorted by surprise, than as anything meant for your ear.'

'My dear uncle,' said I—but seeing him frown, I added—'I beg your pardon, Monsieur de Carryfort, will you permit me to mention to you, briefly, the causes and the objects of my coming to Paris!'

'No, madam. You need not give yourself the trouble. I have already heard of the Marquis de Grammont; and can imagine everything you may choose to tell me.'

'The Marquis de Grammont! Oh! what has *he* to do with my coming to Paris? I know not even if he is in existence, and it is many years since I have heard the mention of his



name. Nor has it, in those years, ever once passed my lips until this moment !'

My uncle smiled contemptuously. 'But I am told you are mistress of the pen, Mrs. Fitzgerald; and that little magical instrument is often endowed with convenient potency.'

'I know not what you would say, sir; but it is evident to me, that you have in some way been misinformed respecting me and mine. Shall I intrude too long on you, if I recount the principal events of my wretched life? You appear to know something of my early years,'—here he abruptly interrupted me with—

'Where are you living, Mrs. Fitzgerald?'

'With persons of the name of Murphy—an Irishwoman and her daughter, residing in the Rue St. Florentin; who tell me, they have the honour of being known to you.'

'Known to me?' repeated he, fiercely and disdainfully. 'May I trouble you to mention your business here with me this morning, Mrs. Fitzgerald; and I must request you to do so quickly.'

He looked at me, while saying this, with an expression so severe, that I saw there was no possibility of extending my stay a moment longer, unless I instantly complied with his requirement. My business was soon told, and as soon disposed of; for he abruptly and decidedly declined any further effort for me with the college; adding, he knew not but that in coupling his name with mine he had already compromised its respectability. This observation fell on me so crushingly, and with so mysterious an air, as to inflict a species of distress stunning and entirely new to me. I rose to go, but trembled so exceedingly, that without asking permission, I again sat down. Not a tear came to my aid; nor could I force a syllable from my lips, for my heart swelled almost to suffocation. The count, seeing the overwhelming effect of his last remark, said, in a milder tone—'There are mysteries in your life, madam,—I wish there were not. It is too late to bid you beware of your associates, or to tell you that a woman is judged of by her domestic and chosen inmates. I beseech you to believe, that I have no intention whatever to interfere at all in your concerns;

otherwise, I should say, that a young woman of character and delicacy, as your appearance is specious enough to imply, is generally prudent in the choice of her residence. I have been told that you fell into poverty in Ireland—and poverty is, I allow, a palliation for many omissions, both to ourselves and others. But there are wrongs to ourselves, which not even poverty may palliate.

‘Excuse me, madam, I can hear no reply. The information on which I have been induced to make these remarks is of too indubitable a nature for me to hesitate a moment in giving credence to it. I therefore ought not to have said what I have said; and lest your appearance and your visible distress should lead me into further wrong, I will bid you adieu. When you are sufficiently composed to depart, you will ring the bell.’ With these cutting words, and a manner at once stern and gloomy, he rose to go.

Wrought up almost to madness by the dishonour with which his mysterious words seemed to cover me, and unable to speak, I sprang forward, making supplicating gestures to detain him. With a repulsive wave of the hand, he darted out of the room, closing the door after him.

I did not remain long where he had left me, but, with as much speed as I could make, regained my wretched chamber on the fifth floor. Fortunately, I found myself alone there; for at that moment I could not have endured the sight even of my children without an increase to my suffering. I fastened my door, and, with a feeling of unutterable anguish, threw myself prostrate on the floor.

It was neither in humility nor in resignation that I did this, but my whole soul was filled with a sense of wrong so oppressive, that I was an insupportable burden to myself.

I had been long inured to adversity, but dishonour had never in any shape been mingled with it. Its tainted breath had never before poisoned my respiration, or uttered my name. I had made a league with Poverty, and taken Sorrow to my arms. Neglect was my familiar, and Humiliation my sister. But with an evil like this, I could make no compromise, nor knew I how to deal with it; for in taking a survey, as I had

sometimes done, of the mortifying possibilities of my future lot, I had never thought of this.

What had I not hoped from this interview ! The ties of blood can never be broken, and as we advance in life, and death diminishes the circle of our relatives, we cling closer and closer to those that remain. I had never seen my uncle until now, still I felt that he was mine—that he was my mother's brother ; and although his unkindness on my first arrival had destroyed all dependance on him as a friend, the thought of seeing him had inspired the hope of awakening him to a sense of what he was to me, and what was due to himself, in his unfortunate niece.

Hopes and recollections that had for years slumbered in my soul, had been awakened. But to what purpose, except to sharpen the pain which his most mysterious and offensive words had inflicted on me ? The more I aimed at discovering his meaning, the more I was bewildered. Why had Monsieur de Grammont's name been introduced ? Still more, why was it offensively introduced ? But these queries could only be replied to by the bewildering suggestions of fancy, for which, in the impenetrable darkness that surrounded me, there was no sphere. A review of the cruel part which my uncle had borne in our interview, drew at length bitter tears from me ; and, compelled as I now was to resign, perhaps for years, if not for ever, all hope of ministering to the welfare of a beloved child, and losing thus the object for which I had become an exile, I would fain have returned to Ireland, and buried myself and my griefs in my parent earth. But this was impossible ; and after many hours of almost suspended life, I revived to a sense of the pressing duties that remained to me, and to a new perception of the treasures still left me in my little girls.

In recurring to the mysterious words of my uncle, it was quite evident that something must be wrong in the residence which I had chosen, and it was some relief to me to arrive at certainty on any point. Hitherto I had lived so much apart from the Murphys that I scarcely knew more of their pursuits than on the first day of becoming their inmate. I had, indeed, no leisure for observing their movements. But it was now a duty

to myself to learn what was passing around me. Thus occupied, I became a perpetual prey to misgivings, and suspicious of every movement that took place. Very soon I had an opportunity of observing occurrences in the salons of Mrs. Murphy, which I now began occasionally to enter, that explained in some measure the vague and alarming insinuations of my uncle. There were, I knew from the first, frequent assemblies there; but I supposed them to be simply *réunions* of her friends and neighbours; and as I dreaded nothing so much as growing into familiarity with my hostesses and their acquaintances, I always secluded myself at such times strictly within the precincts of my own chamber.

Now, however, I paid a diligent attention to everything that was passing, and soon discovered that the evening amusement of the house consisted in gambling; and I had reason also to suspect, that the parties were frequented by persons of disreputable character.

In the first moments of my surprise and alarm, I imprudently expressed to the Murphys themselves the horror that I felt at the discovery, and decidedly told them I could no longer remain in their house. They replied with disdain and defiance, demanding of me immediate payment of the debt I had incurred for my board and lodging with them. This demand, though of small amount—having paid my first month in advance—touched me sorely, as I was unable to comply with it, in consequence of not having received from Ireland a remittance which had been due several weeks.

In my next interview with Mrs. Murphy, she insultingly offered to compromise with me, on condition that I would join her evening assemblies. Stung to the quick by such a proposal, I declined it with too visible a contempt. After this the Murphys threw off all restraint on their manners; every courtesy was abandoned, and their resentment of the stand I had taken was visible in every part of their demeanour. Under these circumstances, as my remittance did not arrive, I saw complete destitution marching on me with giant strides. My nights were passed without sleep, my days in that sickness of heart which arises from ‘hope deferred.’



In the streets I saw persons of all ages and conditions pursuing their respective objects, and I envied even the menial labourer his lot. How gladly would I have cast off every vestige of a superior condition, could I by so doing have gained an exemption from the corroding cares which an uncertain subsistence entailed. I doubted not that *my* hands might be taught to do whatever others' had done before me; but I had not yet arrived at the point which constrained me to the experiment of manual labour.

I subsequently discovered that even this was an art, all easy as it seemed untried, that required early initiation, and that it would be less difficult for me, who had been reared in deplorable ignorance of it, to die of want, than to acquire a successful knowledge of it. The discovery which I had made of the hateful character of Mrs. Murphy's house, kept me in a perpetual fever of desire to leave it; but no remittance came, and I was compelled to stay until I could discharge my debt there.

Both mother and daughter made frequent remarks, reminding me how much I was in their power. Indeed, I began to think that I ought to feel obliged to them, for their forbearance in allowing me to remain, after the affront they had received from me respecting their evening amusement.

To give myself occupation, and divert my thoughts, I began to put into some form a diary, which I had kept for many years, but which hitherto consisted of loose fragments, that had been written at various periods, to shorten the hour of suffering or fill up an interval of leisure.

My uncle's mysterious hints had shown me, in a new and strong light, the isolation of my lot, and the defencelessness of my position, in some of their worst consequences. By arranging a history of my early life, I should not only be making a record of its occupations and pursuits, in an accessible and durable form, which would protect me against misrepresentation, but it would afford me at this trying period a sphere of thought that would remove me from the scenes and occurrences around me. I entered on it without delay, that I might not be wanting to myself in efforts to preserve some composure of mind, although I continued under the most distracting apprehensions.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

THE Murphys now kept no measures with me, but practised a systematic persecution, which daily revealed some new source of disquiet and alarm. Still the postman brought me no advice of my draft, and being almost entirely out of funds, I had nothing to oppose to any outrage offered me, except unavailing remonstrance for what they considered they had a right to inflict, or an occasional show of courage that had no existence in my heart.

In making my pecuniary estimates before I left Ireland, I was not aware that the practice in Paris, both in schools and lodging-houses, was that of payment in advance. I had paid a month in advance to Mrs. Murphy on my first arrival, and not being prepared for this call, I had been embarrassed by it; the more so as my remittance from Ireland had been so long delayed.

Except occasionally, I had never, since I had been with the Murphys, accustomed myself to go out even to the Protestant church, without being accompanied by one of them, or informing them where I was going; and they had made it a point that I should not do so, under pretence of its being dangerous to me as a stranger. But as I was no longer a stranger, there was no reason for this restraint, and I resolved on going out, for the future, without previously giving any account of my intended movements.

My children and myself were accustomed to be narrowly watched; but we were so fortunate one fine morning as to quit our prison without being seen to depart. Being resolved to extricate myself if possible from my present position, I made my way with rapid steps to a boarding-school not far distant, where I had been informed that English *pensionnaires en chambres* were received on very moderate terms. I soon made an agreement, satisfactory to myself, with Madame de Corbière, the mistress of the establishment, and engaged to enter on my

term with her as soon as I was in possession of the necessary funds.

To facilitate this, I went, instantly on quitting her house, to call on the banker, to whom I had been apprized that my letter of credit would be addressed. I should have taken this step before, had I not been dissuaded, and even prevented from it, by the Murphys.

On making my inquiries at the bank, I was informed that the letter of credit in question had long since been received, and paid to the person in whose favour it had been drawn. It is impossible for me describe my surprise and consternation at this intelligence. I immediately demanded an audience of the principal of the bank, who showed me a receipt for the amount of the draft, to which my name was affixed.

His astonishment was not much less than my own, when I assured him that I had never employed any one to receive the money, and that the name affixed to the receipt, though mine, was not of my writing. I moreover told him that the draft had never been at all in my possession, it having never come to hand; in short, that I knew nothing whatever of the transaction. The questions of the banker were close and shrewd, and although a countryman of my own, a sort of distrust hung on his brow, which augmented my panic, for I thought myself at once irretrievably ruined.

The frankness of my communications appeared to dispel his first doubts; but on learning my place of residence his countenance again clouded, the name of the Murphys seeming to have a disagreeable effect on him. I saw that I was disparaged, if not even condemned, by the very mention of it. The principal object for me, however, was to ascertain who had done me this wrong. As there was no one in Paris who could have had the knowledge or the power to do it except the Murphys, my suspicions naturally fell upon them. But I had self-command enough to suppress any mention of them at this moment; nevertheless, the banker himself at the close of our interview, appeared to have arrived at the same conclusion as myself, and telling me that I might expect a visit from him in the course of the following day, withdrew to his private room.

I hastily quitted the office to return to the Rue St. Florentin. My dread of meeting the Murphys, after the information I had acquired, was great, and was only controlled by the conviction of its immediate necessity, and the terror of soon finding myself and family houseless and destitute. It is impossible for any one unacquainted with destitution such as mine, to listen with interest to the mention of the many fearful fancies that haunted me, as I retraced my steps with my two children from the detested habitation of the Murphys.

When I reflected that I had it not in my power to confront them with any proof of the wrong, which I had no doubt they had done me, or to claim from them a restitution of what was so essential to my existence, while it was so easy, and would be so gratifying to them, to inflict on me the penalty of a debtor, I saw no escape from their power. What if I should be taken from my children and immured in a debtor's prison? But this was a contingency so hideous, that I would not allow myself to contemplate it. A crisis was certainly approaching, and come what might, perhaps I ought to feel hope rather than despair, and reversing the maxim, 'All change is evil,' exclaim, 'any change for me must be a benefit.'

It was one o'clock before we found ourselves mounting the long flights of stairs to our fifth *étage*. As we reached the top, we saw two ill-looking men in the act of taking leave of the Murphys, at the exterior door of their ante-chamber. As the men retreated down the stairs, I encountered the mother and daughter, whose countenances exhibited a consternation which at first sight made me suspect they had already heard from the banker. I was aware that I met the glance of Mrs. Murphy with too visible an agitation; but I had never been successful in the art of concealing my emotions, and my mind was at that moment on the rack of apprehension.

Both mother and daughter stood in the doorway as we attempted to pass, without yielding an inch; and as I was exhausted by mounting the stairs, I retreated, and leant on the balustrade for support. Our having gone out without the knowledge of the Murphys, was evidently an event which they were determined to resent, and formed an addition to the numerous transgressions already registered against me.



Their looks were menacing, as Mrs. Murphy said, 'You have been abroad this morning, madam—you are really growing very independent. What a mortification it must be to you that you cannot sustain your independence by paying your debts! Take care—I know all you are doing; but you will not be able to escape me. You are not yet out of my house, nor shall you go, but by my leave; and if you do not wish to find yourself in the hands of a jailer, you will make no further attempt at it. You and I can never be friends, Mrs. Fitzgerald; but I do not yet wish to go into extremes with you, unless you provoke me to do so.'

These words seemed to give substance to the shadowy forms of evil that were hovering over me, and my nerves were in some degree braced, by the necessity of contending with a stern reality. It was evident that Mrs. Murphy intended to exert such power over me as a creditor might lawfully use over a debtor; but what I had just learnt at the banker's, if it could be proved against her, might rescue me from her grasp, and place her as a criminal in the power of the law.

This thought, amounting almost to certainty, passed hurriedly through my mind, and enabled me to say to her, though in faltering voice, 'I am certainly your debtor, madam, for nearly a month's board and lodging, which, according to the custom of Paris, should have been paid in advance. That it has not been, is my misfortune, not my fault. Why I have been disappointed of the remittance I have so long expected, and which would have enabled me to cancel my debt, you perhaps know better than I do.'

I was able, as I uttered these words, to look full at Mrs. Murphy, and to perceive that her countenance fell under my glance, with a consciousness so decided as not to be mistaken.

She turned away with a quick movement, took her daughter's arm, and they walked off together, without a word of reply.

I made way to my own chamber, and threw myself on the bed, where I remained some time, so lost in vague terrors as to be nearly insensible to the presence of my two dear little children, who were hovering about me, and wiping away the tears which happily came to my relief.

'To-morrow,' it is said, 'is nowhere to be found, except per

chance, in the fool's calendar;' and yet on this contemned to-morrow, all my hopes of respite from destruction were now built—for had not the banker promised to come 'to-morrow' in person, to search out—perhaps to rectify, the wrong that had been done me? I endeavoured to dismiss the thought of this eventful 'to-morrow' by caressing and playing with my children, who responded to my feelings with a sweetness that fell like the dew of heaven on my heart. But they wanted their brother Frederic, they said, that mamma might kiss him too, and that they might tell him what he ought to do for her when he was a man.

Thus reminded of my lost child, and dubious of what the next hour might produce, I took my two girls in my hand, and went towards the Irish College, that I might afford to them and myself the gratification of imagining that we were near the little prisoner within its walls.

As we walked round the building, I observed, not far from us, a person whose outline so resembled that of the 'Jesuit Executor,' that I hastened to come up with him, resolved to implore him on the spot, for a sight of my child.

As he looked behind him, I fancied he must have recognised me, for he instantly quickened his pace, and turning a corner, was out of sight in a moment, so that I was left unable to ascertain his identity.

When we returned to the Rue St. Florentin, it was nearly six o'clock, and the Murphys as usual, at the ringing of the door-bell, were at hand to ascertain who entered. They did not fill the doorway as in the morning, but scowled at us terrifically as we passed, though without any verbal discourtesy.

My children were suffering from want of something to eat, and as there were no visible preparations for dinner, I began to fear that I was to be starved into submission to my persecutors. At seven, however, an hour later than usual, we were summoned to the dinner-table. Not a word of greeting passed on either side as we met; but I moved to them as I took my seat at the table, a courtesy which they did not acknowledge, and we soon dispatched a very unsavoury dinner.

When the cloth had been withdrawn, Miss Murphy rose, and

my children rose to amuse themselves elsewhere. Mrs. Murphy and I were left alone. I had been in a deep reverie for some minutes, with my eyes cast to the ground, when, on raising them, I met a full and piercing stare from my opposite companion. She looked as though she would destroy me with a glance, and trample me under her feet afterwards. I was roused by the frightful expression of her face, into a sense of some immediate danger; and gathering up the fragments of my courage, looked at her calmly, but inquiringly.

She understood my look, for she ejaculated, 'By Jupiter, what daring; for *you*, indeed, most wonderful! You wish to know, no doubt, how much longer I will house and feed you, without payment of costs? Your time is short; nor can you now hide from my vengeance in *secret passages*, or *haunted rooms*, or *whistle dogs* or *soldiers* to your rescue, or call——'

When she had proceeded thus far, she stopped short, with a sudden jerk of the voice, rose from the table, nearly overturned it with a shove, and strode out of the room.

While she had been thus speaking, in tones and gestures certainly unusual to her, I received so strong an impression of her identity with Margaret Brian, that I was nearly petrified by the discovery. I had never seen Brian, and only remembered that a description of her person, which had been once made to me, answered so exactly to Murphy herself, as she appeared on this occasion, that I could arrive at no other solution of the enigma she presented, than that she was Brian herself. The difference of names seemed an impediment to this conclusion; but the assumption of a feigned name was easy to a person like her. Besides, had she not recurred to the incendiary plot against Mulgrave Castle? And who but Brian could have known of its '*secret passages*,' and '*haunted rooms*,' and other particulars which she had alluded to? The inference from all this was too strong to be resisted.

Was I then under the roof, and in the power of a woman who for years had hung like a vampire on my father's life, and who had so often threatened destruction to his whole family? A burglar, who had haunted and robbed our house of its most costly treasures? An incendiary, who had plotted its destruc-

tion, and that of its whole household, by fire? Was it to this being I had entrusted my life, and the lives of my children? Oh! in such keeping, who could count on safety? Not a life amongst us was worth a twelve hours' purchase. And yet we were in her power, so fast, there seemed to be no possible escape for us, except that ignis-fatuus of 'to-morrow' should bring a rescue.

I rose from my seat in haste, to seek my children, and retire with them to my own chamber. It was now eight o'clock, and in another hour, perhaps, the accustomed guests, from whom I shrank as from a horde of basilisks, might be assembled in the *salons*.

I locked and bolted myself into my room, and put my children to bed. Believing as I did, even more firmly as I continued to reflect on its proofs, that I had discovered Brian in my hostess, I commended myself and my children to God with a throbbing heart, and lay down without taking off my clothes, fearing that the consciousness which Murphy herself must on reflection feel, that she had divested herself of all disguise, might induce her to commit some immediate outrage on us.

I continued long awake; and thought made its usual circuit through the troubled regions of both past and present, labouring to trace to its real cause my calamitous lot.

Could it lie amongst the compulsory and false vows that had been uttered at the altar? Perchance the guilt lay there?

Yet as the soft breathing of my lovely sleeping children reached my ear, did I not bless the Divine Giver of such gifts? —Did I not pray, and strive to live for them? What greater boon, had I been alone in the world, could I have received, at this most frightful crisis of my life, than death? Yet I desired intensely still to live, that I might shield them from the evil world around them!

As the night wore on I must have fallen asleep, for all at once I was roused to consciousness by the distant sound of voices in the remote *salons*, which rose and fell, in stifled harshness, through the closed doors.

As they occasionally opened, the raised tones of one discordant voice, louder than all the others, arrested my attention as a



reminiscence of one I had heard before. While memory was busy in endeavouring to recall the original, I fell into a troubled sleep and dream, from which I awoke trembling and gasping for breath. I sat up to recover myself, when a door suddenly burst open, and a rush of feet was heard entering the ante-chamber of my room.

Then, voices rose in loud tones of passion, and rang around the walls—a fierce struggle followed outside my door, which threatened every moment to burst it open. As, however, I knew it to be securely fastened, I kept myself tolerably tranquil. Amongst various other sounds, I heard distinctly the hard and peremptory tones, and the distinct articulation of Mrs. Murphy. She was endeavouring to control the tempest around her; but her efforts were vain.

Over the top of my room-door there was a range of glass panes, through which, on the opposite wall of my chamber, flickered the moving lights outside, and then the shadows of human heads, in quick succession traversing each other, fell on it for a moment, and were gone again. Amongst these, was an outline so like that of the Jesuit, as to add to the mysteries around me. Suddenly the struggle of personal violence ceased, and an instant after the confused vociferation also ceased, leaving only a low moaning sound from a single voice, close at my door, which said—‘I’m not dead—I shall yet avenge myself! Give me back my gold—I say, give it me back—or take the consequences.’ This was followed by a deep groan and a moment of silence. As the words, though in a gasping and feeble tone, had been uttered in English, I detected the peculiar enunciation of the Irish parish priest.

No doubt now remained with me of who were my inmates; but, as if to make assurance doubly sure, I heard Mrs. Murphy say, ‘Patrick Connor, you are under my roof, and I will teach you—,’ the remainder was said in a whisper; but the moaning man replied, in a sharp, broken tone, ‘Jewels! did you say?—jewels? By St. Patrick himself, but you shall answer for that!’

As this last menace spent itself on the air, an outbreak of voices succeeded, in French, some of which proposed to bear

the priest into an interior room, and lay him on a bed. He protested against it, but his resistance was vain, although he swore that, as he did not want to die, he would not remain under Mrs. Murphy's roof.

But the ruling spirit was there, and he was carried off. In a minute after the ante-chamber was forsaken, and the lights had departed.

The night seemed very long, although it had been thus broken, and I did not sleep again until worn out with thought.

The discovery of the preceding evening had shown me a mine under my feet, and revealed the causes of that blight which had fallen on every effort I had made for the benefit of my family since I had been in Paris. From the first moment of my arrival, and long before, this (would-have-been) assassin of the inmates of my cottage was keeping close vigil on me, and spreading toils for my feet, into which my exigences and my inexperience led me blindfold.

Since then, her intrigues for my ruin had been going on with headlong success. My funds embezzled by her—myself her debtor—and my name dishonoured! Where might all this end? I had now no doubt that the mysteries at which my uncle had hinted were written fabrications of hers, to prevent his acknowledgment of me. That she could never have been admitted to his presence was evident. But with her notorious talent for letter-writing, it was easy to believe that she had assailed both my uncle and the council of the college with statements and forgeries of atrocious import respecting me and mine, so that neither the one nor the other cared to divulge them.

The outline of the Jesuit, which I had seen shadowed on the wall through the glass panes, was an appalling fact; and recollecting that I had, as I believed seen the Jesuit himself, when walking with my children in the precincts of the Irish college, I had not a doubt but that he was living in Paris. A new and fearful mystery was thus created to augment my terrors, for if it was indeed he who was one of the revellers of the night, there must be some intimate connexion betwixt him and the Murphys, and I was again, when least prepared to defend myself, 'in the grasp of the priests.'

## CHAPTER XXV.

ABOUT eight in the morning, I awoke at the sound of a loud ring at the exterior door of the dwelling. When it was opened, high words were heard, but they were not intelligible. I was very anxious to despatch the business of the toilet for myself, that I might be able to perform it also for my children, for I felt that we ought to be ready for any contingency that might occur.

As I opened my door to receive from the servant an article which I had rung for, I perceived that everything in the ante-chamber was in great disorder, and some deep stains, apparently of blood, near my door, had been recently attempted to be washed away from the floor.

The exterior door of this room, which led out of it to the stairs, stood partially open, and through the opening I saw two men, having the appearance of policemen, stationed outside, as if on service. At the sight of them my heart died within me, for it struck me that they might be there on *my* account.

Oh, how I longed for some ear into which I might have poured out my anxieties and whispered my fears. My eldest child was indeed eight years of age, but it was impossible to think of torturing her young heart with the feelings of mine. No; in such an extremity there is but One, to whom we may utter all the extravagance of our terrors.

I had so often proved the efficacy of imploring Divine aid, that after having again sought it, I wondered I had deferred for a moment to do so.

It was the month of November, and though the weather had been up to this period unusually fine for nearly two months that I had been in Paris, it now began to feel chilly, and the atmosphere was dark and heavy. On this morning especially, the day seemed so reluctant to advance, that one might well have feared it would never return.

Immediately on retiring to my room after breakfast, without

having seen the Murphys or heard anything of them, a servant tapped at my door, to tell me that a gentleman waited to speak with me. I hoped and supposed it might be the banker, and immediately went to him in the *salle à manger*.

It was not the banker, but a little mean-looking man, though tolerably habited, who, on asking if I were Mrs. Fitzgerald, without waiting for an answer, advanced, and seized me by the wrist. I naturally recoiled, and endeavoured to withdraw my hand; but his grasp was so violent and painful that I burst into tears at the insult. Recovering myself, however, in a moment, I said—‘I am so unfortunate as not to know you, sir; why do you thus grasp my arm?’

‘Madam, I beg your pardon, it is my duty only that could induce me to make myself disagreeable to you. But I see that you are a *lady*, and will therefore not take advantage of me if I leave you free.’

So saying, he let go my arm, which was already swollen with the violence of his pressure. He stood before me with a scrutinizing look for several minutes, while I endeavoured, by calling every motive to my aid, to brace my nerves, and be prepared for whatever might follow. As he continued to look at me without speaking, I said to him—‘May I inquire your business with me, sir?’

‘My business, madam, is an unpleasant one; and the more so, as I did not expect to meet with exactly such a person as yourself. However, I must do my duty.’

‘And what is that, sir?’ I asked, despondingly.

‘Why, indeed, madam, you must excuse me for the present. Mrs. Murphy will, no doubt, soon be here, and perhaps she will answer your question. It is her affair; but—I may perhaps ask you if you are not her debtor, and whether she has not many times asked you for payment of a small amount due to her, without success?’

I made no reply, but these questions revealed at once the measure of my calamity. It was evident that I was about to be incarcerated. I did not, however, suffer myself to sink; but still hoped for the arrival of the banker, and at every sound turned to look for him.



But my questioner did not forget that I had not replied to his inquiries. They were, therefore, repeated in another form, and I related to him the exact position in which I stood with Mrs. Murphy.

Having been thus frank with him, I thought I might venture to ask his name; for as yet I had no idea whom he might be.

'My name, madam,' he said, 'is Le Soutein,' and he handed me his card.

I again inquired, 'Are you the attorney, sir?'

'I am, madam.'

'Are you, then, employed in that capacity to demand the debt I owe Mrs. Murphy?'

'I am, madam.'

'And if I cannot pay it—what then, sir?'

Having said this, I burst into tears.

'Oh, do not weep, madam. Your debt must be a very small affair. Surely you have something which you could turn into money for the discharge of it?'

'I fear not, sir.'

'How long have you been with Mrs. Murphy, madam?'

'Not quite two months, sir?'

'And you have never paid her anything since you have been with her?'

'Only for one month's board, sir; which I paid in advance, on my first arrival here.'

"My instructions, madam, are for two months' board for three persons. If you have your bill and receipt for the month you have paid, perhaps you would be good enough to show it to me?"

I turned to fetch the document from my own chamber, when he again seized my wrist, saying—"I must not lose sight of you, madam," and thinking it unavailing to resist, I suffered him to go with me as far as the door of my room. I there paused, saying, as I did so—"This is my sleeping-room, you cannot, therefore, enter here. But I will return to you in a moment."

To which he replied, sharply—"If you will not let me enter with you, madam, neither can I let you enter alone."

'Am I then your prisoner?' I inquired.

‘Not precisely that. But the moment that forbearance is at an end, there are two policemen on the outside of that door,’ pointing to the outer door, ‘to whose protection I shall be obliged to commend you, unless you can avert it by propitiating Mrs. Murphy.’

As he said this, I could forbear no longer, but in spite of all my efforts to avoid it, a smothered scream of horror burst from me. At this critical moment, a loud ring at the entrance door startled the lawyer. He instantly loosed his hold, and at the same instant I rushed into my chamber, and locked myself in with my children. They had heard my scream, and seeing my tears, threw themselves crying into my arms.

I remained thus for several minutes, in an embrace too agonising for me to write of, without feeling afresh the worse than deathlike anguish of a mother about to be torn from her children, under such circumstances as mine.

But there seemed no pause in the action of events; for before we had become at all tranquil, a tap at my door announced that another gentleman, Mr. O’Callaghan, the banker, waited to see me in the *salon*.

I instantly disengaged myself from my children, and rose to attend him, although trembling with an undefinable mixture of hope and fear, as though, in doing so, I were either about to consummate my evil destiny or to emancipate myself from the power of Mrs. Murphy.

I entered the *salon* with a timidity more like that of a criminal than an accuser. No fixed purpose was in my thoughts; nor could I conjecture what part I might be called to bear.

The Murphys were already there, looking with fierce astonishment and ill-concealed anxiety. They occupied a sofa at the upper end of the room, and the banker was sitting at a table in the centre of it, with ink and paper before him, while a clerk stood at his elbow, awaiting his commands. He rose at my entrance, and advancing towards me, said in a low voice—‘Before I can proceed in the business which brings me here, madam, it is necessary that I should have a few minutes’ conversation with you in private.’

I moved, scarcely knowing whither, towards the *salle à man-*

ger, where, encountering my would-be jailer, M. Le Soutien, I was at a loss to know what to do with him, as the banker had requested to speak to me alone. But Mr. O'Callaghan disposed of him very summarily, by saying—'are *you* here, Le Soutien? be good enough to retire for a few minutes to the ante-chamber.' As Le Soutien left the room, Mr. O'Callaghan closed the door after him, and handed me to a chair. He then took a seat, and addressing me with a courtesy of manner quite unexpected, said—'After you left my office, madam, two days ago, your name struck me as one that I ought to be acquainted with. I hope you will pardon the liberty I take, when I beg to know if you are related to the late Mr. Frederic Fitzgerald, of Beech Park, in the county of —, Ireland?'

'I am the widow of Mr. Fitzgerald; of Beech Park.'

He started from his seat, exclaiming—'Can it be possible! Mr. Fitzgerald married a daughter of the late Sir William Mulgrave!'

'I am that unhappy person.'

'Have I then the honour of addressing a daughter of Sir William Mulgrave, and Mrs. Fitzgerald, of Beech Park?'

He clasped his hands together, and looking round the room, exclaimed—'How is it possible, madam, that a lady of your condition can have lived in this house.'

Recollecting what Monsieur de Carryfort had said respecting the dubious character of the Murphys, I felt it necessary, in order to defend myself from probable injurious inferences, frankly to mention my reduced circumstances, and to state with what views I had come to Paris—my disappointment on the day of my arrival, and the pressure of difficulties under which I had been compelled to accept a temporary shelter in Mrs. Murphy's house.

'I had imagined,' said I, 'that as my hostess was a country-woman of mine, her house would at least be reputable and safe, whatever else it might not be. When I discovered my mistake, it was too late to rectify it, and I have since been detained here by compulsion. But from having lived entirely apart from the principals of the house, I know so little of them, that I could hardly dare to pronounce sentence on them from anything I have

seen. I have, however, apprehensions respecting them too alarming to be expressed. Yet, alas! I cannot get away.'

'Madam,' said Mr. O'Callaghan, 'I had the honour to know Sir William Mulgrave, from his having banked with me when he was in Paris, a few years since, and the very great respect with which he inspired me makes me desirous of being useful to his daughter. If there is anything in which I can serve you, madam, I beg you to command me. Shall I be deemed impertinent, if, after your obliging frankness with me, I inquire whether you are in debt to Mrs. Murphy?'

I explained to him my exact position in that respect, not omitting to state what had just passed on the part of M. Le Soutien, and the terror in which he had put me by his menaces of a debtors' jail.

'Good God!' he ejaculated, 'the man must be mad! But you must leave this "den of thieves," madam, and that without delay. It is no place for you to remain in another hour—the Murphys are notorious for a swindling transaction, which took place here not long since, and which was reported in all the journals of the day. As by the forgery of your name to a document passing through my house you have been most seriously inconvenienced, you must allow me at once to advance the amount of your draft.'

I had begun to reply, but he stopped me by saying—'Do not concern yourself, madam, on my account, I will take care to refund myself, and, as I have no doubt, by discovering the author of the forgery. Excuse me for a moment; I must speak to M. Le Soutien, who occasionally does business for me.'

He went into the antechamber to him, and on returning, inquired if I knew of any house to which I might remove, on leaving Mrs. Murphy's. I informed him of Madame de Corbière's *pension*. He inquired if I knew anything of her, and when I said nothing, but as the mistress of a boarding-school, he replied—'I recollect her now, and I believe you may trust yourself there.'

'And now, madam,' he continued, 'I hope you will not consider me presuming, if I advise you to let me settle with the Murphys the amount of your bill. Le Soutien tells me, that in



the memorandum they have furnished him of your debt to them, they have overcharged you, as he has learnt from yourself. But if you will inform me precisely how much you owe them, I will take care they shall not be paid more than their due.'

I explained the account to him, and after thanking him with heart-felt gratitude for his services, which he would not acknowledge as such, I returned with him to the *salon* in which we had left the Murphys. Pausing on our way to it, he said,—'As my time must necessarily be short here, I beg to say a word respecting your departure, which I hope may be immediate, as I could hardly consider you personally safe, after what may perhaps occur in the coming interview. If it would be agreeable to you to remove within an hour, I will leave my clerk here to assist your departure. Meantime, lest Madame de Corbière should not be prepared to receive you so promptly, I will call and inform her of your coming.'

Oh, how grateful to me was this kind consideration! how unexpected, too! My whole being seemed changed. I attempted once more to thank Mr. O'Callaghan, but he would not allow me.

When we re-entered the *salon*, the Murphys were precisely in the same position as we left them. As Mr. O'Callaghan entered with me, and handed me to a chair, they looked aghast at each other. He resumed his former seat at the table, and the clerk placed himself at his elbow as before, to whom he said, 'M Venier, request M. Le Soutien, who is in the next room, to walk in here.'

As Le Soutien entered, he cast a sort of sheepish, mortified look at me, and a glance of affright at the Murphys. Mr. O'Callaghan motioned him to a seat; then, turning to Mrs. Murphy, he said sternly, 'You, madam, I presume, answer to the name of Murphy?'

She bent her head with supreme hauteur.

'You have, perhaps, yet to learn,' he continued, 'that a forgery has been committed in a draft that has passed through my house, in which this lady, Mrs. Fitzgerald, has been defrauded of upwards of twelve hundred francs. Is this information now communicated to you for the first time, or have you heard of the affair before?'

The querist looked from the mother to the daughter, while Mrs. Murphy became deadly pale, and her daughter busy with a smelling bottle. An appalling silence of a few minutes ensued ; but recovering themselves, they both exclaimed, that it was insulting to put such questions to them ; what had they to do with the forgery ? were they to be treated thus in their own house ? and, with a violent movement on Mrs. Murphy's part, she rose from her seat, her daughter following her example, and both attempted to leave the room.

This was not permitted. A whisper from the clerk had fixed the attention of the banker on Miss Murphy, and in a tone more authoritative than courteous, he desired them both to resume their seats. The little lawyer had sprung up to open the door for them ; but he also was commanded to return to his seat.

The clerk then, addressing Miss Murphy, inquired if she did not remember to have seen him, some weeks before, in his office at Mr. O'Callaghan's bank. She first hesitated, then denied, and at last told him that he was 'an impertinent fellow.'

The clerk then, without further circumlocution, told her he was ready to make oath to her having received, from his hands, the amount of the draft in question ; for which he had taken a receipt from her, which she had signed in his presence, 'Helen Fitzgerald.'

As the clerk ceased speaking, Mr. O'Callaghan exclaimed, 'Your evidence, M. Venier, is decisive ; but it must be given in a different court. Our path is now clear. Miss Murphy must appear before the proper authorities. You, M. Le Soutein, as a man of law, in my service, must direct the proceedings, and adjourn with us to a legal tribunal. We have police officials already on the premises ; I found them on duty here, on my arrival, awaiting Mrs. Murphy's orders ; they are now under mine.'

Mr. O'Callaghan had scarcely uttered these words, when both mother and daughter, looking wildly round, fell at the same instant on their knees before him, uttering a vociferous and passionate entreaty for mercy, so much at variance with their looks of defiance, as to give a tragi-comic air to the part they were performing, and render their deprecatory denials and their prof-

fers of restitution at once contradictory and ludicrous. As Mr. O'Callaghan continued, in spite of all this, to look severe and firm, tears, faintings, and hysterics were tried, but in vain, either to excite his sympathy or obtain his civility.

Coolly allowing them to exhaust themselves after their own fashion, he awaited a pause, which at length enabled him to say, 'Mrs. Murphy, you kneel to me as if I had the power to pardon your daughter's offence, or remit the punishment of it. I have no such power. I would have the affair carried into a court of justice, and let the law take its course; but if you would avert that proceeding and its consequences, you must kneel to Mrs. Fitzgerald—not to me. She is the injured party, and the only one whose province it is to decide on the next step to be taken. If you can prevail on her, by confession and restitution, to obliterate the wrong you have done her, I certainly will not impede the exercise of her clemency; but you must decide quickly, as I have no more time to waste on your indecision.'

After waiting their reply some minutes longer, Mr. O'Callaghan's forbearance was exhausted, and he desired M. Le Soutien to call in the police. Frightened at his vehemence, the Murphys turned themselves round on their knees towards me, and with their faces covered with their hands, howled out a jargon of words, utterly unintelligible.

Mr. O'Callaghan, perceiving that this mode of procedure was but an evasion of his requirement, exclaimed impetuously, that he would have no mincing of the matter, and that if they were not prepared to offer at once a suitable and satisfactory submission and acknowledgment of the wrong they had done, he would terminate the scene.

Then, turning to Miss Murphy, he said, 'Allow me to be your prompter, in this one act of your drama. You must say to that lady, that although you have committed the forgery, you are sorry for it; but that if she will allow the affair to be settled, without carrying it into a court of justice, you will make any reparation that she may dictate. If you are unable to speak, said he, bow your heads, ladies (in acquiescence in my demand), to Mrs. Fitzgerald.'

They both bent their heads lowly, though not to me. But Mr. O'Callaghan, seemingly still dissatisfied with their concession, turned to me, and assuming the air and verbal form of an officer in a court of justice, said, 'How say you, madam? Prosecution, or no prosecution? Shall I hand these respectable ladies to the police officers or not, madam?'

There was something irresistibly ludicrous in the whole scene, but especially in Mr. O'Callaghan's manner and look, as he thus appealed to me; but I briefly replied, that I left the affair entirely in his hands, without the remotest wish to require more than he might think due to me.

'You do me much honour, madam,' said he, and turning to the Murphys, who still remained on their knees, he said, 'It is now for you and your daughter, Mrs. Murphy, to accept or reject the umpire proposed by that injured lady. What say you? will you abide by my sentence or not? Yes, or no?'

They both replied, faintly, 'Yes.'

'You and your daughter may rise, then, Mrs. Murphy, and take your seats. I have no more to say to you at this moment, as it will be necessary for me to consider, before I can decide on what terms I shall advise Mrs. Fitzgerald to obliterate the wrong that has been done her, and to suffer your daughter to escape its consequences. Meantime, I shall leave the police, whom I found at your door, in charge of your premises and of yourselves, until my return.'

Mr. O'Callaghan then wrote me a cheque on his bank for the full amount of my draft, and handing it to me, said, 'I shall have the honour of calling on you, madam, as soon as I have despatched the affair here.'

He then took his leave, leaning on Le Soutien's arm, whom he took with him, saying aloud to his clerk, that he was to await Mrs. Fitzgerald's commands in the antechamber.

Their departure was the signal for a change of characters. No sooner was the door closed, than Mrs. Murphy, with a ghastly look of rage and bitterness—notwithstanding her recent abjectness—rose, and, striding across the room before I had time to get out of it, attempted to fasten the door. Not succeeding in her attempt, she placed herself full before it, exclaim-



ing, in one of her fiercest tones—'Murderess, by inheritance, of all my fame and fortune! Destroyer of my daughter! Why am I thus become your victim—at the moment, too, when fate had made you mine? What are *your* powers, or those of all your race combined, that *I* should thus be foiled by *you*? You—a moping, spiritless, and fair-faced heretic and beggar; void of all energy and enterprise, which might have made you worthy of the hate I bear to every drop of your proud father's blood! We fed at the same breast—we grew together; he at first was kind, and afterwards disdained me. For this, 'twas joy to see his house destroyed—his offspring blighted like untimely fruit—and every one of his once worshipped name withered, or withering, beneath my vengeance! For I had power to undermine your haughty father—ay, and your witless husband, too! I have a sphere unknown to you. And bliss it was to see my prospects prosper—to see Fitzgerald loathe the joys of home, and a soft wife, so dutiful, she knew not how to resent her own deep wrongs! And Fate, to crown me with a final triumph, sent *you* to Paris—threw you and yours within my walls. If I have griped you hard,—say, Margaret Murphy has a constant heart, that never yet forgot an injury, or shrank to do the bidding of her church. Call up your hated father from his grave—bid him, too, answer, for what you have suffered. His haughty nature spurned me and my faculties—ay, I was scorned—and in such sort, that my last breath shall still be hot with the remembrance! My deep revenge was well-nigh sated; you and yours were in my toils, whence you had never made escape, but for those paltry francs, which for their own sake I disdained, and only saw in their embezzlement *your ruin*! What angel, or what demon, taught you to traverse thus my schemes? thus to arrange inquisitorial plans, and brand my daughter with the hangman's mark on my own hearth? But you shall pay for this. Go where you seek to go—take your own course; I will pursue you still, and still with fiercer hate, because in your own person you have become my evil genius; and in this foreign land, where I was living in a sort of peace, with an habitual and composed revenge, awaiting but my moment, you have disturbed my plans, and turned a victory all

but won, to a defeat that wakes the demon in me! Look to yourself—for wheresoever you direct your steps, my curse is on you, and my spirit near, to wake the elements of destruction round you, and set them into play. Why do you gape, and look in wonder on my words? they are but faint precursors of the deeds that soon shall follow. Those looks of yours would seem to say, you pity me. I am not mad. Take back your boon, detested as yourself! If I was formed with powers of highest soaring, and disdained the low condition of my race, why was it so? What had I done, that they whom nature made inferior, should take a stand above me? 'Tis but the natural course of power pressed down and caged in iron poverty, to break the bounds that circumscribe its energies, and level it with the dust. But why talk thus to you? You, who know not lofty thoughts—you, in sweet humility and resignation, yield to every hand that strikes, with hateful meekness; kissing oppression, to bribe the angels of your pious dreams! Begone! I say; nor ever blast me with your sight again. 'Twill be enough for me to hear of your extinction: to see it, were a pleasure that would kill me with its joy!

In giving utterance to this last sentence, with an increased exaltation of tone, the speaker had thrown into it such an excess of rage as to exhaust herself of breath; and as she stood with her right arm extended, and her form drawn up, panting for respiration, in an attitude of impassioned execration, she looked like some fabulous impersonation of Evil, in a moment of frenzy. Although I had been penetrated with terror by the import and violence of her harangue, wondering how it would end, I was fully alive to the sort of demoniac grandeur which marked her commanding features and figure, as she stood before me, suggesting thoughts of an unearthly and irresistible power.

But in the next moment, the Pythoness was reduced to the level of ordinary mortals, by throwing herself into the arms of her daughter, in a screaming paroxysm of hysterics. As this movement left the door unguarded, it afforded me an opportunity of escaping out of the room; and I was in a moment after in my chamber, with my deserted children.

As I clasped them in my arms, and recalled all that had

occurred within the last hour, I scarcely believed in my own identity. To have been rescued from the destruction prepared for me, after having approached the very brink of an evil so fearful as that of imprisonment, and an inevitable separation from my children, seemed incredible, or miraculous. And yet it had been effected, and by an agency which I had not foreseen.

This deliverance was the sweeter to me, that it had originated, though remotely, from the influence of my dear father's character. I was not the less indebted, however, to the justice and the courtesy of Mr. O'Callaghan, to whom I must feel for ever bound, by sentiments of the deepest gratitude.

My children were delighted at the idea of leaving so horrid an abode, and eagerly lent me such assistance as was in their power. With the additional aid of the servant, my packing was soon effected ; while the presence of Mr. O'Callaghan's clerk, in the ante-chamber, no doubt preserved me from outrages which might otherwise have been offered me. I deputed him to carry my farewell to the Murphys, and to inquire if there was anything which they desired of me, before my departure. But they would not vouchsafe him a reply ; and without further delay, my children, and myself, passing by the police officers on the landing, descended those long flights of stairs, which I never saw again.

As the gate of the hôtel closed after us, I felt like a bird escaping from the snare of the fowler. I was once more in possession of myself ; even the phantoms conjured up by the menaces I had so lately heard were, for the moment, all left within the gate.

I had sent my baggage forward in a fiacre to Madame de Corbière's residence, in the Rue d'Angoulême, under convoy of Mr. O'Callaghan's clerk, myself and children, with some small parcels in our hands, following after as quickly as we could. To shorten the distance, we had turned into the Allée des Veuves, intending to proceed by the Rue Ponthieu. As we made a short turn of the Allée, we came in sight of a figure which painfully arrested my attention, and which could not be mistaken. It was that of Father Rénel, the Jesuit executor. As he was walking before us, he knew not that we were in his rear ;

but turning his head, he recognised us, and shot at once into a narrow path leading towards the Rue St. Honoré, where we lost sight of him. Although I could have wished, at this moment, to importune the Jesuit respecting my son, the sight of him, and the certainty of his identity, palsied my limbs and curdled my blood, as the rushing recollection of his deeds, and the ruin he had brought on my house, came over me with a crushing feeling of their ever-increasing reality.

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

WHEN we arrived at Madame de Corbière's residence, I found that Mr. O'Callaghan had not forgotten to apprise her of our coming; and we were welcomed by her with more kindness than I had expected. As we were too late for the dinner of the *réfectoire*, we were invited to dine in the *salle à manger*, at six o'clock, where I was to meet the whole family party, consisting of both French and English ladies, who were living in the establishment as *pensionnaires en chambres*. I employed the interval, until dinner time, in arranging my own apartment, in which I found so many comforts of which I had been destitute at the Murphys, that I felt myself, in comparison, almost luxuriously accommodated.

The fatiguing events of the day brought sweet sleep to my pillow that night; and when I awoke next morning, and beheld the sun peeping, though faintly, into my chamber, I had a feeling of happiness that had been long unknown to me, in which my children evidently participated.

At the Murphys, without ever complaining of the discomforts around them, they seemed always in a state of subdued feeling, which caused them to repress every childish sally, and keep a sort of terrified vigil on the looks and movements of the principals of the house, whenever they were in sight. On this morning, they were full of frolic and fun, pointing out and remarking on the new objects around them.



The events, if I may so call them, of the last twenty-four hours, had so completely changed not only my position, but myself, that I was joyfully bewildered by the transformation.

I felt once more the exhilaration of hope, and, under its influence, imagination leaped over difficulties which yesterday seemed insurmountable. I had been put into possession of funds which I had thought lost ; and I had now the means of at least a temporary subsistence.

This was too great an occurrence to be cast into shade, even by the discovery that had been made, in Mrs. Murphy's revelations of herself, of the identical 'demon-woman' who had so long been the evil spirit of my father's house. As fancy recalled her, in all the strength of her unprincipled power, with a vaunted confidence in herself of an ultimate triumph over me, my heart indeed sickened again ; for I could not but foresee that whatever might be the final result of a malevolence without bounds, my path must henceforth be incessantly haunted by imaginary as well as real evils, and all my efforts to sustain myself and family might still be perpetually thwarted by an unseen hand.

Stranger as I was, in a strange land, she might already have organized means for my destruction, of which it was impossible for me to make myself cognizant by any vigil that I could keep ; even in removing to a distance from her, might I not have given greater scope to her fierce and unwieldy vengeance ? If while living in affluence in the bosom of my family, in my native land, herself unknown to me, and without any visible connexion with me, she had been able to penetrate into the sanctuary of my domestic circle, and to exercise there an influence so destructive as that of which she had boasted,—what might not now be apprehended from her resentment, on account of that personal offence which I had committed in bringing to light her daughter's criminality ?

I was so utterly defenceless, that if she should be in league with the Jesuit, and attempt what she threatened, I should be irretrievably lost. How entirely different would have been now my position, had I obtained from Monsieur de Carryfort the ser-

VICES he could so easily have rendered me, without effort and without cost to himself.

In my first interview with Madame de Corbière, I perceived that my name was well known to her, yet I could discern no link between the two families. Madame de Corbière had made no objections to receive me, yet I now recollected that she was cold and *brusque* in her manner, as though my becoming her boarder was not an arrangement perfectly cordial to her. Mr. O'Callaghan's interest in my welfare must doubtless have influenced her; but what prejudices might she not already have conceived against me? All this was but conjecture, still, perhaps, short of reality, as nothing seemed too extravagant or too atrocious for the Murphys to commit.

Had we more faith in the invisible world, our souls would not be without anchor when the storms of life are passing over us. In the events of the past day, I had been made, in some measure, the avenger of my own and my family's wrongs, without the guilt of contriving or desiring such a triumph. Might I not consider this to be an omen of good to me, and an instance of that unseen influence in human affairs, of which, in contemplating the events of life, we see such frequent proof?

Before entering upon the course of occupation which I had prescribed for myself in my new domicile, I wrote to Monsieur de Carryfort a simple relation of the discoveries I had made respecting the Murphys, and of the identity of Murphy herself with Brian, my father's foster-sister. I entreated him to allow me one more interview, that I might be able to discuss with him, whether or not any steps should be taken against Murphy, and the Irish priest connected with her, relative to the burglary with which they had been formerly charged by my father.

I carried my note myself to the porter's lodge of my uncle's hôtel, that I might be certain of its safe delivery. On presenting it, I was informed that he had gone, a week since, to the south, for the winter. I obtained his address, but ascertaining that he was not likely to remain stationary in any place, it appeared useless to forward my letter to him.

As it was impossible for me, without my uncle, to attempt any chastisement of Murphy and her accomplice, I dismissed

the subject, for the present, from my thoughts, with the full purpose of devoting myself unreservedly to the pressing duty of advancing my children's education. Being in a house of education, I had, of course, many accessories to aid me in attaining this object.

There were several English ladies, with their children, living at Madame de Corbière's with the same object as myself. But I had not the advantage of intercourse with them, being severed from their society by having been received on lower terms than they, in consideration of my eating in the *réfectoire*, with the pupils of the establishment, instead of in the *salle à manger*, with the principals of the house, as is customary with the *pensionnaires en chambres*.

On the second day of my residence with Madame de Corbière, I received a visit from Mr. O'Callaghan, who came to give me an account of the terms on which he had settled my affair with the Murphys. They had promptly paid him the amount of the draft, in consideration of which he had withdrawn the police from their house, and left them free. They had also readily deducted the overcharge they had made on me, amounting to considerably more than half the sum they had at first demanded, and I was really happy to have had this affair settled without a prosecution.

As Mr. O'Callaghan had performed the part of a real friend, and proved himself in every respect worthy of my confidence as well as my gratitude, I made a short recital to him of Mrs. Murphy's real history; on hearing which, he expressed strong regrets that he had not known it before; as it was, he said, an omission of duty to society, to suffer, such a wretch to escape the vengeance of the law. Nevertheless, on reflection, he feared that although by a prosecution the daughter would have been disposed of, and prevented from committing further mischief, yet the mother, being left at large, might have continued to be a perpetual, and more incorrigible annoyance than ever; so that perhaps, it was best as it was, and he fervently hoped I might hear no more of them.

I could not conclude our interview without some expression of gratitude for the debt I owed him, as my deliverer from the

den in which he found me. But he declined all acknowledgment, assuring me that he should feel eternally indebted to the chance that had enabled him to be of service to so near a relative of the late Sir William Mulgrave.

We were usually summoned to the dinner in the *réfectoire* by a bell, at one o'clock. After I had been about a week at Madame de Corbière's, I one day entered this cold and comfortless room, with my two children, and was motioned by the female at the head of the table, a person whom I had never seen before, to a seat reserved for me. As I was taking possession of it, I looked round the circle to discover my children, who had been separated from me, when, to my inexpressible surprise and horror, my eyes fell on that very being who, in the whole creation, I least wished to see. It was Mrs. Murphy, seated directly opposite to me!

My sight almost failed me; but mustering courage, I moved to her slightly, a courtesy which she returned with a look that nearly petrified me. Her commanding form was evidently swelling with feelings that sought no concealment from me. They were, nevertheless, chastened by her habitual self-command and regulated violence, so that she omitted nothing which was due either to the place or the companions of her meal.

But her presence recalled so many mystical terrors, that all the sunshine of my thoughts instantly disappeared. It was with difficulty I could sustain an appearance of decent composure.

During dinner, Madame de Corbière came into the room, and very coldly recognised me; while, as if to make me sensible of her indifference, she lavished on Mrs. Murphy an ostentatious courtesy. All this was a portentous preface to my new residence.

Before the meal ended, I had the additional pang of learning, that the stranger at the head of the table was a daughter of Mrs. Murphy's, just installed as the English teacher of the establishment. Of her I had never heard before; and her being brought into the house at this time, so immediately after my arrival there, was so deliberate an hostility to myself, that I could not but fear everything which had been menaced by the mother. I had but just cleared one pitfall, when I found myself falling into another.



Madame de Corbière appeared to be in strict friendship with my avowed enemy; and if so, I was more than ever in the power of that enemy, since she had now the assistance of others, to aid her in the accomplishment of her purposes; and they, the persons with whom I had deposited my safety and my comfort.

In ruminating on my position during the hours of darkness, I shuddered at the perpetual recurrence of those evil chances which pursued me everywhere, and which no foresight seemed able to avert. But day returned to suspend reflection; for though Time is sometimes taunted as a lingerer, nothing stays his flight. I lived on as I could, endeavouring to shut my eyes against the future, and absorbing myself in occupation, as the only remedy against despair.

Self-preservation, as well as neighbourly duty, seemed to require that I should speak to Madame de Corbière respecting Mrs. Murphy; as she could not surely know with whom she had connected herself and her school. But another question then occurred to me, of, Whom may Madame de Corbière herself be? After entertaining all the *pros* and *cons* of the question, I decided on not interfering for the present with the natural course of things.

Some two or three weeks had passed without any new occurrence, or any direct communication with the Murphys, except such as was unavoidable with *her* who daily sat at table with us.

One day, on entering the *réfectoire* at the customary dinner-hour, I found the table without its usual head, and the little community there in a state of great excitement. Inquiring the cause, I learnt that the mother of the English teacher had been missing from her home two days.

Shortly after dinner I met with Madame de Corbière, who, with unwonted courtesy, stayed to converse with me, and to inform me more particularly of what had befallen Mrs. Murphy; for whose safety, she said, her daughters entertained the most serious apprehensions. She further told me, that the unhappy woman, the night before her disappearance, had had a bitter quarrel with a man who was an Irish priest, and who, in consequence of heavy losses from time to time at her *ecarté* tables,

had complained openly and menacingly of foul play. Madame de Corbière expressed a becoming sympathy in the distress of the daughters, but professed to be greatly shocked at learning—as she said, for the first time—that Mrs. Murphy's residence was notorious as a *rendezvous* for *ecarté* players.

As I had unfortunately been an inmate of that residence, I felt it necessary, in self defence, to say, that during the time I had been under Mrs. Murphy's roof, I had confined myself so entirely to my own apartment, as to know nothing of what passed in the *salons*, until a short time before I left.

On the following day, the wretched woman was found in the fearful 'Morgue.' The hand of violence had been visibly on her—she was frightfully mutilated; and a considerable sum of money that she had about her person when she left her house had been abstracted.

Her destruction caused the downfall of her daughters, who, now that their way of life was known, were obliged to hide themselves from the few respectable persons who had hitherto countenanced them, in ignorance of what they were.

For me, it was an event of immense moment. I saw myself at once delivered from a fiend, who believed herself to hold the very cord of my destiny. For many weeks, almost months, her appalling, mysterious form had been crossing my path, both in my sleeping and waking hours, now assailing me in one shape, and then in another. But all at once the hideous phantom disappears, and is seen no more.

Human existence may truly be called a vapour; and when it is passed away, what an illusion seems that power, which appeared to have been embodied in it!

That I was not, at this moment of horror, under the roof of the Murphys, compelled unavoidably to see and to hear the details of the bloody tragedy, and perhaps to testify to the most revolting facts, was a cause of inexpressible rejoicing. My heart was filled with gratitude, and I lived in comparative happiness for many weeks, often meditating on that strange influence which the wretched Mrs. Murphy must have had in the house of Madame de Corbière, since her removal had changed the aspect and spirit of the whole family, towards my children, as well as myself.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

My eldest daughter, Dora, was between eight and nine years of age, and Caroline between seven and eight. Their characters had begun to assume a definite cast; and it was with joy unutterable that I observed also a development of mind beginning to manifest itself, full of promise for the future, by which I might hope to be restored to a companionship as precious as that from which I had been wrenched in my early years. —

In this delightful anticipation, the sordid cares of my life were sometimes forgotten, and every thought was suppressed, except such as my children's happiness and amiability inspired.

They began to bear a resemblance to my dear father. There was about them something of the same benignant look and air, and, alas! also the same fatal disposition to give away whatever they possessed indiscriminately. Had I not been so straitened in my pecuniary circumstances as to make the most minute and odious parsimony a duty, how beautiful, under suitable regulation, might this trait of character have become, at an age when selfishness and covetousness are often paramount.

The worn and mean attire of my children seemed unperceived by them, although they sometimes counted the number of visible darns on some article of their dress, as a pretext for bestowing on mamma an equal number of kisses. They knew not that she waked at night, to meditate on how that mended attire was to be replaced, when it had become too shattered for further repair. The grovelling nature of incessant pecuniary cares debases the mind, and contracts its powers; and that hydra-headed evil, embodied in the little word *want*, so unmeaning on the ear of plenty, acts like a torpedo on the morbid sense of him who has long breathed its pestilent atmosphere, and struggled with it on his own hearth. But I had not yet experienced all that poverty is capable of inflicting. I had never been a houseless wanderer—had never literally wanted bread to satisfy my hunger. My privations had principally consisted in the lack of

those things which the habits of affluent life had rendered necessities. Now, however, I approach a period in my history on which I cannot look back without shuddering, although it has long passed away.

When I first entered upon a residence at Madame de Corbière's, the funds arising from my recently cashed draft had enabled me to discharge Mrs. Murphy's debt, and also to pay Madame de Corbière a quarter's board in advance for myself and children. These disbursements, together with some other unavoidable expenditures, had now nearly exhausted my purse.

But as my next remittance would become due within a month, my anxiety for the future arose principally from a conviction, that in Paris, as well as in Ireland, my income was, and would continue to be, too insufficient to supply my children and myself with the bare necessities of life, whatever frugality might be exercised or privations imposed. I had, indeed, already carried experiments on these points to the extremest severity, so that there was no further aid to be expected from them.

Nevertheless, when I balanced my half year's account, I found a deficit, which, though trifling in itself, afforded sufficient evidence that, with the increasing wants of my children, as they grew older, it must in no long time bring me into debt, and consequently to ruin. I had already offered my services to Madame de Corbière, as a teacher in her establishment, but she had demonstrated to me by calculation, that I should save more by continuing, as I had hitherto done, to instruct my children myself, in my own apartment, and avoid the expenses of the school-room, than I should gain by filling any department in her house as a teacher, the salary she gave being very small.

I then consulted her respecting another plan that I had formed; which was to give lessons out of the house, in private families: but this she did not approve; and as without her recommendation I should be unable to carry such a scheme into practice, I was compelled to relinquish it.

Had Mr. O'Callaghan been a married man, I would have solicited of him an introduction to his family; but as he was not, I could not apply to him for any advice or assistance, considerate



and generous as he had been in arranging my affair with the Murphys. Although I was thus compelled, for the moment, to relinquish every project I had formed, I still hoped that some new occurrence might, ere long, enable me to increase my resources by my own exertions.

At the termination of my first quarter, I was reminded, by note from Madame de Corbière, that the ensuing quarter became immediately due in advance; but as it was not possible for me to make the advance until I received the remittance now due from Ireland, and which I every day expected, I explained to Madame de Corbière my exact pecuniary position. She accepted the explanation, with great courtesy, as a sufficient apology for my not complying immediately with the rule of her house. A few days afterwards, I received a letter from my agent in Ireland, containing, as I joyfully supposed, my expected remittance.

But on opening it, and perusing with eagerness its contents, I soon learnt that the property on which the fragment of my jointure had been secured, was destroyed by an incendiary fire; and that, as an omission had been made by my agent in the payment of the insurance on it when last due, all I had in the world was swept away. I read this letter over again and again, before I was able to comprehend the extent of my calamity. When I did understand it, although an habitual feeling of ruin, and a constant expectation of a final stroke had become a chronic affection of my mind, ever since the Jesuit had announced his power over me, I fell under the shock as one who is taken by surprise.

But the first moments of a real calamity are less terrible than its effects. These come slowly and silently on us, from day to day, reducing us gradually to extinction. The mariner whose bark the storm is rending from under him, seeing that all expedients are exhausted, silently lashes himself to a top-mast, and awaits his fate. I had not yet arrived at this entire negation of effort, for I had children to save; and so long as the 'wasting barrel' and the newly-drained 'cruise of oil' retained but a single meal, I dared not yield to the despair that would have rendered me impotent.

While I ruminated on the course I should take, my children came running into the room, and all lonely and lost as they appeared to me at that moment, I pressed them to my heart, and abandoned myself to the transports of an unutterable terror and tenderness. I could not speak to them of what had happened; but it was essential that, without loss of time, I should inform Madame de Corbière of it; for of course I could no longer shelter myself under her roof. In an interview with her, shortly after, I related to her all that had occurred, without reserve; and having done so, found no difficulty in prevailing on her to allow me and my children to remove from her house without delay. Knowing, as she did, that I had two uncles in affluent circumstances, she no doubt expected that I should be assisted by them, and expressed a hope that I should shortly be able to return to her.

I made no allusion to them, however, although a new hope had sprung up in my heart, that the extremity of my circumstances might now, perchance, move their compassion. To my uncle at Vienna I had never yet made any application for pecuniary assistance, lest I might thereby unsettle the security of my mother's dependence on him. But I now wrote to him without delay; and stating the destitute circumstances of my family, besought him to bestow on me only enough to support us for a few weeks, so as to give me time to organize some means whereby I might earn, at least, enough to prevent our perishing of hunger. I knew well that I had an advocate near him, who, if he should apprise her of the object of my letter, would plead zealously for me. With her I was unable to communicate, on account of the postage. I had, indeed, never been able to keep up any correspondence with her or my sister since my arrival in France, on that account; and on the same account, my faithful Mary was also lost to me.

While my letter was on its way to Vienna, I made arrangements with a woman of the name of Fanchette, who for the last three months had been my laundress, to receive me and my daughters into her house as lodgers.

Fanchette occupied a small and mean *entresol* near the Madeleine, which was then in progress of erection. She had but one

room to spare, and for that she asked me only the small sum of two francs per week. I was, of course, to provide myself with what I might want of furniture; but having no bed, and scarcely anything except personals, I requested Fanchette to purchase some clean, dry straw, in sufficient abundance to enable me to make beds for us all. I was in possession of a few francs, and was therefore able to pay for this at once, and to cover it with sheeting, which I had by me.

When I came to take possession of my room, I found, besides my straw-bed, which looked invitingly clean, a table, and two chairs, and a pot of artificial flowers on my mantel-piece—*garniture de cheminée* being essential to a Frenchwoman's ideal of comfort.

Fanchette could neither read nor write; but it is not necessary to do these to be intelligent and amiable, for she was both to a remarkable degree, and showed besides, so much tact and delicacy in arranging and contriving for our convenience, that I almost fancied I had found Mary. How merciful is Providence! how visible its interposition, even in our meanest affairs! I had always associated the idea of extreme poverty with vice, ignorance, or, at least, vulgarity; but in my illiterate hostess I found a mind full of intelligence, a heart overflowing with goodness, and a defferential delicacy of manner in her intercourse with us, who she knew had fallen in life, that might shame the hard deportment of many a Lady Bountiful in the hovels of the wretched.

After paying Fanchette for my straw, I had only from ten to twelve francs left, for my lodging and food, for such time as I might be able to keep myself and my children alive. In full consciousness of this fact, I frequently lost the power of thought, and sat for hours together in speechless imbecility. Without just such a kind and beneficent creature as Fanchette, I believe I should have yielded at once to my despair, and expired. Shocked as she was at our actual condition, of which she soon became cognizant, she retained her cheerful air and tone; and, spite of her own poverty, and the fear she entertained of appearing to know too much, she repeatedly brought into our room some eatables for the children, which she affected to be a superfluity that she knew not what to do with.

I had been under the necessity of confining our diet to bread and water from the first day of our residence with Fanchette, who burst into tears when she first made a discovery of this fact, and ran hastily out of the room, in an undisguised paroxysm of feeling.

The desolation of my heart, at this time, made sad ravages on me, and a few days reduced me almost to a spectre; but the hope I had founded on my letter to Vienna kept me from sinking. Meanwhile, I lost all power of conversing; there seemed to be a great gulf betwixt me and every one I knew or met, which I had neither the power nor the desire to pass. The magnitude of my affliction thus plunged me into a frightful solitude, in which I felt crushed by the weight of my own impotency. The expected letter from Vienna at length arrived, with the postage paid; a circumstance that at the first moment flushed me with joy, as I knew that my children's bread must otherwise have been curtailed to defray it. I thought, besides, that it was a good augury. The contents of the letter were, nevertheless, such as the poor may generally expect, in circumstances like mine, from their rich relatives. My uncle actually pleaded poverty; and explained himself by saying that his whole income being absorbed by his habitual expenses, it was not in his power to make me a remittance, but advised me to apply to my uncle De Carryfort, who, being on the spot, was better able to judge of my wants, and to supply them. He was even zealous enough (in his desire to serve us by his pen) to write a note to the count, which he requested I would deliver in person. I saw my dear mother's hand in the advised mode of procedure, but I doubted the efficacy of the experiment.

Yet I went once more to the residence of Monsieur de Carryfort, and finding him at home, sent in the baron's note, inclosed in one of my own, in which I told him that my children and I were dying of want. But I was not permitted to see him; a verbal answer by the servant informed me that 'Monsieur le comte begged I would not trouble myself to call again, as he was going immediately out of town.'

The sacred fable, that represents the dog of the rich man as having more compassion than his master for the beggar that lay



in want and disease at the gate of his mansion, is as applicable as ever to the class whom it was intended to warn. Could my uncle, but for one hour, have suffered the wretchedness which I was then suffering, and the almost greater misery of asking relief from him, how deeply would he have felt that 'it is more blessed to give than to receive!'

My present visitation had come upon me so suddenly, and with so exterminating a power, that, without assistance from friends, nothing short of a miracle could save us from being swept away by it from the face of the earth. There had been neither time nor scope for effort: what I could do, I had done, but it had been utterly unavailing; and now, with my children dying by inches before my eyes, I cried out, in agony of spirit, 'Where are the ravens that fed Elijah? and where, above all, is the God of Elijah?' But in this tempest of feeling, the 'small still voice' was not heard to answer; and nothing remained, but that we must die. After all, said I—as my heart, emptied of hope, became too sick for further resistance—to die of want is no unusual occurrence. Why does this doom affect me so deeply? What am I, or what is my father's house, that the visitations of the Almighty should pass *us* by, more than others? How many thousands of God's creatures die daily of want, or of disease arising from it, in spite of the bountiful provisions of both nature and society to avert it? Yet little know we of the evil we have never felt. How often have I glanced at the stinted obituary of the wretch who had died of famine, on the pavement of the street, or on the floor of the hovel, and, washing away the impression of it in a few tears, have turned from the record, and forgotten it!

But now 'mine eye hath seen all this, mine ear hath heard and understood it;' therefore 'my face is foul with weeping, and on my eyelids is the shadow of death!'

Paris, filled with the products of wealth, exhibits everywhere, with prodigal hand, a profusion of inviting viands; covering her stalls and filling her shop windows with the varied aliments, garnished to invite the appetite of the epicure, while they tempt to evil the poor and hungry wretch who gazes on them. Such is the constitution of society, that in a city thus glutted with

food, the famishing wretch who cannot *buy* becomes another *Tantalus*, doomed to endless hunger and thirst, while surrounded by the elements of life.

I had been about five months in Paris, when I returned from Monsieur de Carryfort's hôtel, under the full conviction that our death-warrant was now signed, and that there remained scarcely anything more for me to do on earth. But the smallest transaction becomes great to the imagination when it is consciously performed for the last time. The mere payment of my week's rent to Fanchette, the only debt I owed in the world, was accompanied with tears. It was with difficulty I prevailed on her to take it; for although she was not aware that I was paying her my last franc, she persisted in it that she did not want it. The balance that remained to me was only sufficient to buy bread for the morrow; so that I very naturally considered our hours to be numbered.

Fanchette had informed me that she was unavoidably going into the country until Monday; and when, at about five in the afternoon of Saturday, she closed the door, to leave us alone for two days, I had no expectation of living to see her return, for I already felt as if I were dying. But at the age of twenty-seven when the constitution is naturally good, the physical nature makes great resistance to death. Had it been otherwise, I should not have survived this crisis.

My children and I made our accustomed preparations for the Sabbath morning of the morrow, and then eating our morsel, lay down for the night. The children were soon asleep, but the loneliness of Fanchette's *entresol*, now that it was bereft of her light, quick step, and her occasional low chant, as she moved about at late hours in her own room, in performance of her occupation, became so oppressive to my fancy as to keep me awake; or, if I closed my eyes for a few minutes in forgetfulness, I fell into dreams from which the terror they inspired soon roused me. At one time, I saw skeleton infants gnawing their own limbs; at another, my children were being tumbled into a grave, without shroud or coffin.

After repeated suffering of this kind, I rose, about three in the morning, and looking out of the small window of my room,

observed, for the first time since I had been there, a large private hotel within view of it.

As the bright moonbeams fell on the court of the mansion, I saw there a moving female figure—apparently that of an upper servant—whose gestures exhibited feelings of an agonizing character.

In Paris, the dwellings of the poor are often in close contiguity with those of the rich. This was the case with Fanchette's *entresol*. Even under the same roof with me and mine, who were perishing of want, on different floors there resided persons of independence and of wealth, who enjoyed every day the pre-eminent luxuries of Paris. But I am wandering; I meant only to speak of the suffering individual whom I saw traversing the *cour* within sight of my window.

A rumour reached me in the morning, that a suicide had been committed in that *cour* during the night; and I felt, on hearing it, that I must have seen the wretched perpetrator of that hideous crime, perhaps at the very moment when she was hovering on eternity. It was not until many months afterwards, that I knew myself to be at all connected with this occurrence. I then learnt that the wretched suicide, whose agonies I had witnessed previous to the deed, was Miss Murphy. The magistrates of the locality in Ireland where the destruction of my property had taken place, when it was known that an act of incendiarism had occurred in their own immediate neighbourhood, left no stone unturned to discover the perpetrators of it. Their researches were successful, and although the act proved to be but the work of one hand, it was discovered to have been projected by Mrs. Murphy and her daughter, and performed under their direction.

Mrs. Murphy's death, indeed, had taken place previous to its actual accomplishment; but letters were found in her hand, darkly interlined by another, and a male hand, enforcing it on the tool selected for their purpose, and offering him Miss Murphy's hand, and a home in her mother's establishment in Paris, as soon as the destruction should be accomplished, thus aiming at a fulfilment of the vindictive and mysterious threats uttered by Mrs. Murphy, on the day I left her house.

Another letter was also found, of a subsequent date, in Miss Murphy's hand, urging the criminal to promptitude, and confirming the conditions on which he had been engaged to perform the deed.

These particulars had been disclosed in the judicial examinations made in a court of justice. The wretched Miss Murphy, just at the time they were taking place, had entered on the service of the family occupying the hôtel within sight of my window. Her connexion with this affair became known to her employers through an application made to them by the officers of justice employed in it in Ireland : and she, being apprized of the charges against her, committed the suicide I have related.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

THERE are calamities in life of which no adequate account can be given by the sufferer, not only because language is incapable of depicting them, but because the pain which they inflict renders the mind too feeble to take note either of itself or of them.

The acute agony that accompanies the waking from sleep of a wretched being, whose intense suffering has been awhile suspended by it, surpasses all words of torture, and can be understood only by those who have felt it.

When I awoke on Sunday morning, it was from a sound and deathlike sleep—the sleep of exhaustion, in which every reality around me, and every thought within me, had ceased to exist. The pangs inflicted by returning consciousness, with all its fearful perceptions, were greater than I could bear ; and I started up, to meet and grapple with the new horrors that rushed on my view. Not that our situation was materially different from what it had been for some days past, except that we were more exhausted, and that this day, unless we could survive the entire want of food, must be the beginning of the end. Fanchette would, indeed, return in the morning, and I should again hear



her pleasant voice; and she would, perhaps, again force on my children her gift of what, to make it accepted, she was wont to call her superfluous food. But could I allow my children to be fed by her who could scarcely support herself? By to-morrow however, the force of gnawing hunger might perchance bear away all sense of what was due to another, and leave me but with a single thought—that of saving my children's lives.

Oh, ye who sit in judgment on the thefts of the starving wretch, whose bewildered sense no longer discerns the sacred barrier that stands betwixt him and another's bread, have mercy on him when he 'steals but to satisfy his hunger!' Yet, better for me and mine to die, than to put forth the hand to evil. Oh, Life! Death! what are ye? Even the possession of life does not teach us what it is. What then can we know of death? None that have passed through its dark valley return to tell us what it is. Nevertheless, with my senses wide awake, and with quickened perceptions of the incorporeal world around me, I saw Death marching on us with rapid strides; and if in watching his advance, I could have believed all which had been given me to do, was done, how joyfully should I have hailed his approach! But he came not alone to *me*; my children, too, must die; and though the youngest, being awhile provided for, would perchance survive us, yet he would be left alone in the world, undefended, unprepared for the accidents of life, and, as a natural consequence of such an isolation, would perhaps die an early death by the hand of violence and cruelty, or from a course of sin. How could I persuade myself that the natural deterioration arising from the want of parental care could be averted from him? My own life was as nothing in the balance with that of my children, whose never-dying spirits had been entrusted to me by the only Bestower of life. The deep truths of our complicated being slumber in the soul during our quiet hours; but awake like giants, to crush us with their strength, in moments of weakness and terror, when nothing is left to us but our despair. Overwhelmed with appalling doubts and cares, and with that sorrow of earth which worketh death, I scarcely dared inquire whether my spirit, so soon, perhaps, to appear before God, were meet for his presence. I attempted to peruse the

sacred pages, but they were a sealed book to me. Every moment I was compelled to retrace what I had read, and force myself back upon passages once luminous to me, but which now conveyed nothing to my distracted mind. I knelt, and endeavoured to pray; but thought vacillated, my brain reeled, and I could no longer realize the divine idea of a Father in heaven. It seemed as though the portals of that world were closed against me, and that the Omnipotent had 'covered himself with a cloud, that my prayer should not pass through.'

My children, shrunken and withered, lay half-dead before me; and the state of listless immobility in which they were, rendered it impossible to rouse, or to interest them in anything. They were every moment overpowered by sleep, or awaking out of it with a frightened start. After some time, a similar stupor crept over myself; and life stood still, both with them and me, until the afternoon, when we gathered round the fragment of bread that remained; and, as 'the widow of Zarephath and her son, had done before us, we prepared to eat it together, and die. I divided it amongst us with a solemnity of feeling that overwhelmed me, and clasping my children in my arms, shed over them a torrent of tears.

We had now arrived at a point in time which touched eternity! Yet we might still live many hours, perhaps days. I had so long been counting the pulsations of my children, watching their deathlike appearance, and listening to their shortening respiration, that, absorbed in those fearful symptoms, no thought of possible relief occurred to me. But suddenly I became impressed with a sense of criminality, in thus sitting still, without making an effort, or raising a cry for help. An impulse seized me to seek God in his sanctuary; for although my prayers seemed no longer to reach the skies, yet perhaps, in concert with other worshippers in the temple of God, my voice might once more ascend to heaven; and I resolved to go, as one of old went to the pool of Bethesda, to wait for 'the coming of the angel there.'

The pallid cheeks of my children, flaccid and faded as the leaves of a rose verging on decay, inspired no hope of their being able to walk to the English church, in the 'Avenue de

Neuilly ;' yet, like myself, they desired to do so when it was proposed to them. We left our *entresol* about four, and although the distance was not greater than that of a quarter of an hour's walk to the Champs Elysées, through which lay our direct path, we did not get there until five. We had then still a distance of another hour to accomplish before we could reach the church, as neither of us was able to move more than a step or two at a time.

The avenues on which we were entering were already crowded with every varied class of society. Amongst them many beggars, on whose countenances no want was visible, yet they solicited alms with success. As I observed that success, the question flashed across my brain like an electric shock,—why may not *I* beg? And yet, as I hastily and unconsciously raised my hand to a passer by, my arm fell as if palsied by the attempt. The crowds around us little thought of the misery that mingled that night with their mirth !

There was everything on that fine February evening to charm the senses—even mine—if a single earthly hope had been latent in my soul. The weather was mild and the air soft ; the sun was sinking in beauty to the edge of the horizon, while the moon was rising in the opposite heaven ; and as the greater light departed, the lesser shone resplendently through the leafless branches of the trees, prolonging day, and courting the willing crowds to linger in their walk. Flower-girls were there with snowdrops and crocusses—the first I had seen in this foreign land—and green-house flowers were also there in rich abundance, and music and song, to lend their aid to the enchantment of the hour and the scene.

Numerous carriages, ranged at the edge of the outer avenue, awaited the orders of those who had left them, to mingle with the joyous multitudes in the Grande Promenade.

In the more retired walks, the customary amusements of a Parisian Sunday were everywhere going on, with an eagerness and an excitement that seemed to mock the misery of a group like ours. But the actors in those scenes saw us not. Pantomime and play—whirling-machines and monkeys—puppets and conjurers—were too absorbing to leave a thought for anything but themselves. These things, which ministered pleasure to

such crowds of human beings, impeded our feeble progress so materially, that we scarcely advanced at all.

The children were so much exhausted that they hung on each other and on me for support, before we had gone half the length of the Avenue. As I was unable to sustain or assist them for want of strength to support myself, I found it would be impossible for us to reach the church; and I bitterly regretted *that* thoughtlessness and over-estimation of our strength, which had brought us so far from our *entresol*.

We had withdrawn to one of the most retired avenues to escape the jostling crowd, and my limbs entirely failing me, I sank on the grass, where I remained for several minutes, with my children clinging to me and weeping beside me, without attracting the slightest attention from any one of the occupied multitudes in our vicinity.

All at once, I heard a sound which seemed familiar to me. It was the playful bark of a dog, repeated two or three times. His rich, full tones struck me as resembling those of Rover; and shaking off the lethargy that had fallen on me, I looked around, gazing into the deep shadows of the wood, almost expecting to discover him there, while I breathlessly listened for a repetition of his bark. It was at length repeated, but the sound was evidently retreating into distance. The weakness of a child was on me, and I wept at my disappointment. But looking at my children, who now lay quietly beside me on the grass, I saw in them a new source of alarm. Their faces were changed, and presented an appearance that startled me. I felt there was not a moment to be lost, and that if we did not return at once to our domicile, we might never reach it more, but might be carried in a state of insensibility to some public place, to die amidst a crowd.

Arousing and caressing my poor children, I explained to them that we must return home immediately. They understood me sufficiently to rise from the ground, with my assistance, and each taking a hand of mine, clung to it, and crept feebly by my side, until we came at length in view of the 'Madelaine,' when a faint exclamation of joy broke from them both, at being so near home.



Home! what a home! but still 'sweet home.' We reached the porter's lodge, and were soon within the gate of entrance. As we crossed the court-yard, a bright moonbeam fell on our path. I gazed on its silvery light, and thought it was the last time I should look upon it. The cares of earth seemed leaving my heart, and I felt with joy that the journey of life was nearly ended.

The porter offered me a lighted candle, which I accepted, and after closing and locking the door of our room as we entered it, my children sank down at once upon their bed on the floor, and became in a moment so utterly motionless, that I doubted whether all were not over with them. I did not attempt, however, to pry into the fearful secret of their deathlike stillness. The time was past for affording them relief. I had nothing with which to revive them, and not physical strength enough to render them corporeal aid of any sort.

A far greater duty pressed itself on me. Their spirits were returning to God who gave them. I tried to kneel, while I commended them to his mercy; but, unable to sustain myself, sank on the floor by their side. A few moments of rest had a wonderful effect on my mind. My soul seemed to wake out of its late stupor, and I realized the promise, 'at even-tide it shall be light.' Yes, all things assumed a new aspect. The spiritual nature expanding itself, and throwing off the dull mortality of an earthly life, mounted as 'on eagles' wings' towards its divine source, while the quickening words of the Saviour, 'he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live,' awakened every glorious hope, every vision of faith my soul had ever known, and I blessed with fervent adoration, in these (as I then thought) my last moments, *that* knowledge I had derived from Scripture, of 'God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.' A sense of sin forgiven enabled me to approach, confidently, Him 'who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,' and to lay my children and myself prostrate before his throne in hope! If for a moment I afterwards thought of the Jesuit priest as the destroyer of myself and family, it was but to feel that I forgave him. How long I lay after this, I know not. As my eyes closed, I became

unconscious. A movement outside the door of my room disturbed me, and the short, half-bark of a dog, roused me to recollection.

It was the same bark I had heard in the Champs Elysées. In a moment, the bell of the apartment pealed startlingly through the silent rooms, and in the next instant, a gentle tap at my door was heard. Though scarcely a step from the bed to the door, I was so long in rising from the floor, that a second tap was given before I could reach it. As I opened it, a large dog rushed in, and nearly threw me down with the fierce joy of his greeting. It was Rover! That I did not fall to the floor, was owing to an arm that was thrown round me to prevent it. I turned to look at my supporter, and recognised, in deep mourning, my own Mary! In the surprise and joy of the moment, I became utterly speechless.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mary discerned the helplessness of our whole party, although she was far from imagining the cause. The candle was still burning, and I was not so unconscious but that I observed her wondering and distracted look, as she threw around a glance of inquiry; and I uttered, as articulately as I was able, 'Mary, we are dying for want of the necessaries of life; take us where we can obtain them.' She looked aghast; but with her accustomed tact, soon procured assistance, and placed us in a *fiacre*. The children, unable to sustain themselves, sank on the floor of the carriage, while Mary supported me in her arms. I had become insensible before we reached the Hôtel Montmorency, whither she took us, and where she had occupied an apartment since her arrival in Paris.

When I returned to life, I was in a comfortable bed, with Mary attending on me, and another person sitting by my bedside. Everything around, except herself, was strange to me; and I had lost all recollection of how I came there.

As I endeavoured to raise myself, that I might take a survey of the place, I found I could not move. In a moment Mary sprang to me, and taking my hand, kissed it passionately exclaiming, 'Oh, my dear mistress, thank God, you are yourself again!'

A doctor, who was waiting in an adjoining room, immediately entered and felt my pulse, but he said nothing. Although I was quite sensible of everything that was passing, I was unable to speak; but in a short time, after several attempts, I articulated — ‘my children.’ The doctor replied, ‘They are asleep in bed, madam, they shall be taken care of; do not allow any thought of them to disturb you.’ Some kind of refreshment having been administered, under the doctor’s direction, I shortly after became restless and bewildered to a fearful degree. I no longer saw Mary, or any one but the doctor, and I thought that what I had lately seen and heard must have been a dream. Even the present appeared like a scene in a dream, and I shrank from the piercing eyes of the doctor, who looked fixedly at me, and attempted to escape from him, but could not move or utter a sound. I then closed my eyes, and horrid visions of all kinds appeared before me, mingled in a confused mass, and in endeavouring to run away, I fell into a deep pit. After passing through the several stages of a nervous fever, I was once more by degrees in possession of my faculties.

My first object of recognition was Mary, and as I uttered her name she burst into tears, but immediately checked herself, and assumed an air of tranquillity. I was at this time so weak as to be borne in the arms of my nurses, whenever there was a necessity for moving me. I found Fanchette often associated with Mary in her attendance on me, and thought myself supremely happy with two such attendants. But where was I? at whose cost? were questions I was impatient to ask; yet, could not muster strength to utter. At length the power of speech returned, and my first inquiry was of my children. A door was opened, through which I saw the two girls standing at a table, Dora and Caroline, each with a doll.

As I uttered an exclamation of joy, the door was again softly closed, and the vision departed. I wept myself to sleep for joy and thankfulness, and when I again awoke, darkness and silence reigned around, except that, in a distant corner of the room, a light shaded by a screen sent forth its soft pale rays, which rather composed than disturbed me. I looked round, and saw Fanchette in an arm chair, wide awake, and looking anxiously

towards me. She approached, and offered me delicious fruit, which I ate with eagerness, then again fell asleep; and after this I began to recover." I was soon allowed to listen to a recital of the wonderful coincidences that had occurred so opportunely, to save my children and myself from a death of famine. I was told that a month had elapsed, and my children were so far recovered as to have almost attained their usual healthful appearance. I was allowed to see one at a time, every day, for a few minutes at intervals, until all restraint was taken off.

As soon as I found myself able to talk, I began to question Mary,—‘Why are you in mourning? and how came you to arrive at our *entresol* at a moment so critical to us?’

‘I fear, my dear mistress, that you are not able to know all yet.’

‘Fear not, Mary; tell me what angel brought you to France, and why you came at a point of time when another hour might have been fatal to us all. Tell me every particular; it will do me good.’

‘I must begin then, my dear mistress, with the death of your good annt, Lady Mulgravè, for whom I am wearing mourning. She lived only two months after I, through your goodness, went into her service. She was a great sufferer, and became very helpless soon after I went to her; and she took such a fancy to my way of doing for her, that she would never willingly have any one else about her person. As her own maid and the other servants were almost worn out with night and day watching, when I first arrived to help them, they were glad to see me, and I lived good friends with them, until they found that their lady preferred my services to theirs. But that is nothing to the purpose. I used to be left alone with my lady, sometimes for hours together; and it was at such times that she was accustomed to ask me questions about the dear mistress I had left. She seemed so much interested in what I told her, that she sometimes wept, till I got frightened, lest I might be doing wrong in telling her what so much moved her feelings. But she continued to question me, until I had told her everything about your dear family, and Father Ossory too. You know, ma’am, that Lady Mulgrave was a Protestant, and she clasped her hands together in joy, as



she heard of Father Ossory's conversion, and constancy till death. And when I told her how much you suffered, at not being able to put a tombstone over him or your own dear infants, she got Sir Felix to write off by the first post, to order a suitable tomb for the good father, and one also for the infants.'

When Mary had got thus far, she was alarmed at my tears, and could not be prevailed on to resume her narrative until the following day, nor even then without the doctor's sanction.

'Lady Mulgrave,' she then continued, 'was not only kind in life, but in death; and even to the last moment continued to speak of you, ma'am, so affectionately that she quite won my heart. She used to say, she wondered how your relations could let you go wandering about the world, as she called it, by yourself, so young as you are, too; and she said she felt great regret that she had not known what she did about you long before. You know, I suppose, ma'am, that she did not come into full possession of her large property as an heiress until seven or eight months before her death, when her father died. She was very rich after that, and everything was at her own disposal. Have you heard how Lady Mulgrave made her will, ma'am?'

'No, Mary; I have heard no news of my family since I left Ireland.'

"Well, ma'am, then I have the pleasure of telling you that she has left you five thousand pounds in cash; and in her goodness, she has left me also the sum of five hundred; and the whole remainder of her fortune, except a few remembrances to friends and charities, she has left to Sir Felix. She was so anxious for his conversion from popery, ma'am, that she used to talk to him on the subject every day, and even in her last moments.

'Her mortal remains, ma'am, were carried by Sir Felix to Mulgrave Castle, and laid in state there, and then buried in the family vault. Of course, ma'am, I came down with the family to Ireland, and had the pleasure of seeing the dear old castle, and feeling myself once more at home in it. Mrs. O'Connell was still there, and we found everything in beautiful order; but it was very dreary without them that were gone, and I did nothing but cry for the first day or two.'

On this subject I could not restrain my own tears, but was soon able to say, 'How did the place look, Mary? You know all my favourite spots, and trees, and arbours,—did you take notice of their appearance?'

'Oh, ma'am, I was for ever running to look at them, for I was always thinking of you when we got to the castle. And though the trees had lost all their leaves before we arrived there in December, I noticed particularly the two that were planted by you, ma'am, and the Marquis de Grammont, on the mound in the park. They are very much grown; but yours—the acacia, ma'am—overtops the oak. They say *that* is because the oak tree is a tree slow in growing; but the marquis said, when he saw the difference, that he was proud of the ascendancy of the acacia—that was his word, ma'am, to Sir Felix; and that it would ever be the pride of his life to render homage to it.'

'The marquis, did you say, Mary? What marquis?'

'Monsieur de Grammont, ma'am.'

'You bewilder me, Mary. Are you not confounding the past with the present?'

'No, ma'am. The Marquis de Grammont came on a visit to Sir Felix while I was at the castle, immediately on his return from India. But I beg your pardon, ma'am. I forgot that you had not, perhaps, heard of the marquis's travels in foreign lands.'

I could not resist the temptation to inquire if the marchioness was with her husband.

'I don't know of any such lady, ma'am,' said Mary. 'Certainly, the marquis has no wife.'

'Is the marchioness, then dead?'

'He has never been married, ma'am.'

A silence ensued; after which, I said to Mary, 'Do you recollect that we heard of the marquis's marriage, and saw it announced in a Dublin paper, at the bishop's house, before I was married, or had consented to be so?'

'It was a false report, ma'am. The marquis's gentleman told me, that when his master heard of your marriage, ma'am, he was at his hôtel in Paris, and had so long an illness on account of it, that they all thought he would never recover. When he

was able to leave his room, he set off for Italy, where he remained for two or three years. After that, he returned to France to look after his estates for a little while, and then set off to the Holy Land. After that he went to the East Indies, and visited Sir Lucius and Lady Mac Neil; and his gentleman tells me, ma'am, that Lady Mac Neil is handsomer than ever.'

I was so much affected by what I had heard, that in spite of every effort to prevent it, I fainted. When Mary had restored me, by the customary remedies, I lay long in silence, and in a state of feeling that seemed to shatter my whole frame. It touched me to the very soul, that I should have been the cause of so much suffering to Monsieur de Grammont. The falsehood respecting his marriage, that had been played off on me, to persuade me that *he* was false, must have been perpetrated by those who were interested in deceiving me. What an odious wrong had I been compelled to commit against him! How could I ever be reinstated in his good opinion? And how could I endure, though I might never see him more, that I must for ever remain, in his estimation, a perjured, faithless creature, who feared not God, nor regarded man! It is true that I had been sacrificed, at last, by my own vow of obedience to my uncle, extorted by fears for his life; and that vow was not uttered until after I had heard of the marquis's marriage. But who could now obtrude this subject on him, so as to make him acquainted with the exonerating facts of the case?

These ruminations were deeply distressing to me, and threw me back so much in my progress towards recovery, that my doctor perceived their effects at his next visit, without being able to discover the cause. I was again forbidden all conversation and excitement of every kind. I submitted willingly. I had no wish to learn more about the marquis from Mary, having already food and facts for reflection, that seemed inexhaustible in their power to torment me. But the past, as it can never be recalled, can only become useful by being rendered tributary to the future; and I resolved, as some atonement for the unconscious wrong I had done Monsieur de Grammont, to cherish a never-ending regret. It was some satisfaction to find that he was not entirely alienated from me. Yet I could not understand

how he could be otherwise, without knowing all the circumstances attending my marriage, and the barbarous coercion that had been used to accomplish it. I resolved, however, not to allow my imagination to deceive me, by the supposition that monsieur de Grammont could now entertain any other sentiment for me than that of compassion for the sufferings I had been compelled to endure. I turned from this subject, to contemplate, with unmixed satisfaction, the income created by my aunt's bequest. This was a substantial good, that inspired me with boundless gratitude, both to God, and the immediate bestower of it. It was more than double the amount of the pittance I had just lost, and would enable me to live in comfort and competency with my two children.

Almost to the present hour I had been ignorant of how the expenses of my illness, and of the hotel, were to be defrayed, and feared I might be living at Mary's expense. In short, my position was a mystery, which I was afraid to pry into, but the perpetual recurrence of which to my thoughts kept me anxious and restless, and no doubt materially retarded my recovery. But now, thanks for ever to my bounteous aunt, and to her who had moved her to such kindness, I should be able to pay all my expenses, and to thank God with sincere gratitude for preserving my life. Yet I was still lost in wonder at the extraordinary and rapid change in my affairs, the immediate causes of which it was impossible for me fully to understand, until I had been further enlightened by Mary, who seemed to have been the chief agent in a Divine hand of producing it.

My dear boy, however, still continued a source of abiding and unspeakable disquietude, for no one about me could afford the slightest information respecting him, and I was as yet unable to make any new effort to recover him. It was long before I had nerve enough to utter even his name to Mary, who had received some imperfect account of him from his sisters, and who had too much feeling to broach a subject which she knew must be painful. She was well informed of what had passed betwixt the Jesuit and myself respecting my access to the child, before I left Ireland, and was therefore able to form her own silent conjectures, and to participate in the disquietude to which she saw that I was occasionally a prey.



## CHAPTER XXIX.

It was now April, and since I had been last abroad, everything in nature must have advanced so much as to make the public gardens and walks look like a new world. I saw proofs of this in the small, well-arranged parterre, overlooked by my chamber window, and in the constant supply of flowers which appeared every morning fresh on my table.

I longed to breathe the air of the Tuileries or the Bois de Boulogne, but my doctor was so much afraid of a relapse, that he still required perfect quietude, to restrain, he said, the action of the too rapid pulse. But Mary's information was the remedy for 'a mind diseased,' and I now felt assured that I should not much longer need the doctor. Yet I had lived so long in a state of perpetual agitation and startling vicissitude, that it was difficult for me to believe in pecuniary security, or feel assurance of permanence in any arrangement of life.

But this was a morbid state of feeling, which I might hope would pass away as I became habituated to comfort, and felt an abiding exemption from the bitterness and gall of that uncertain subsistence which had so long preyed on my vitals.

On the following week Mary resumed her narrative, beginning again where she had left off, with *Monsieur de Grammont*.

'The marquis,' said she, 'when he heard that I, who had been so long in your service, ma'am, was in Mulgrave Castle with Sir Felix's people, sent for me, to inquire whether you were in health, and what was your place of residence; and after a while he was so earnest, ma'am, that he got everything out of me which happened to you before you left Ireland, and sorry I was that I could tell him no more, for I was miserable myself to know how France suited you and the dear children.'

'You told the marquis everything, Mary?'

'Yes, ma'am, I told him all about your marriage, and the loss of your property, and Father Ossory's conversion and death, and a great deal more; but I hope I didn't tell him more than I

ought, he seemed so very unhappy about you, that when once I began, I couldn't stop. As soon as he heard that you had gone to Paris, he was for setting out there the next day; but as I could not give him your address, he sent me off in his own carriage, five miles, to get it from your agent, ma'am. When I got to the agent's house, he was not at home, and I was obliged to come away without the address. The marquis then said he must see the cottage where you had lived, and I must show him the window into which the shot had been fired. After that he drove to the burying-ground, where the little infants and Father Ossory lie; and I went on the box with the coachman, and showed the marquis everything. I couldn't help crying at sight of the graves, and the beautiful tombs placed over them by Lady Mulgrave. Monsieur de Grammont walked away by himself, after he had looked at them, and I didn't see what he thought of them. Next day, he sent me again to your agent, ma'am; and then I got your address, and was informed at the same time that all your remaining property, on which your income depended, had been burnt by an incendiary fire; and that, owing to neglect of the insurance on it, all was gone. It was this dreadful news, ma'am, that made me, with Sir Felix's leave, set out to Paris to seek you, and I have brought from him a draft on Mr. O'Callaghan's bank here, for money for your immediate use, ma'am.'

Mary here suspended her narrative, as she saw that I was unable to bear more at that moment.

After all, thought I, as I was left to myself, it is to Monsieur de Grammont's solicitude about me, that the discovery of my loss was made known to Sir Felix in time to save me! The dream which I had at Mulgrave Castle, in which Monsieur de Grammont became my deliverer, by striking down the arm of the phantom that held the dagger over me, was now so strongly brought back to my recollection, that at this moment I might easily have been persuaded to subscribe to Mary's creed of omens and dreams.

'But, Mary,' said I, when I again felt able to listen to her, 'you have not told me when you left Ireland, or when you arrived in Paris.'

‘I left Ireland, ma’am, immediately after we had heard of your loss by the fire; and arrived in Paris on the very day before I met with you. On the same evening, Saturday, I went, according to the address I had received from your agent in Ireland, to the house of Madame de Corbière, in the Rue d’Angoulême; but not being able to see madame herself, I could not obtain the name of the place which you had removed to on leaving her house, until Sunday, the following day. And even then, ma’am, I was several hours in finding Fanchette’s place; because she was known at Madame de Corbière’s, only by her Christian name. When I did at last find the place, Fanchette’s *entresol* was locked, and the porter at the lodge told me that she was out of town, and the lady living with her gone out with her children to walk. It was then, ma’am, that I went to the Champs Elysées to look for you; but not meeting with you, I returned to the *entresol*, where I was so happy as to find you, ma’am.’

‘But how came the dog to be with you, Mary?’

‘Sir Felix allowed me to bring him as a companion, ma’am; as I felt rather timid about travelling alone.’

‘Ah, Mary,’ said I, as I held out my hand to her, ‘you must be a happy creature, to have saved three human beings from death. And I am not less happy in owing my life, and that of my children, to your attachment and exertions. But you have still much more to tell me. Where did you leave the marquis?’

‘I thought, ma’am, that I had left him at the castle; but when I got to Paris, I found him here. And what surprised me more than this was, that I was told he had crossed the sea in the same vessel as myself, and had been all the way caring for me, and seeing that I had my due. I was certainly a little surprised when I found everything go so smoothly everywhere, especially at the Custom house, and at Rouen, where my trunks were opened and examined a second time. But one of the marquis’s grooms, who met him on his arrival at Havre, was a stranger to me, and, by his master’s orders, did everything, without my knowing that any one was acting for me. The marquis himself I never saw, till I got to this hotel, where I came through the advice of the same groom, whom I found at

the coach-office waiting for me, and who seemed so very civil to me,—though he spoke but very little English,—that I took his advice; and an hour after I got here, his noble and kind master called to speak to me, and to urge me to lose no time in looking for you, ma'am.'

'Ah, Léonce!' I exclaimed, mentally, 'why are you so kind to one who has caused you so much suffering?—And where is Monsieur de Grammont now, Mary?' I resumed, 'and when did you see him last?'

'I have seen him this very morning, ma'am; he calls here every day to inquire after you. It is he who sends the fresh flowers and the fine fruit, and who sent the dolls to the young ladies.'

'Do not tell me any more of the marquis, Mary; what you tell me gives me pain.'

'I am sure, ma'am, I don't think he would do anything wilfully to give you pain.'

'Oh, no, Mary, I am sure of that. But my strength is unequal to the weight of gratitude I feel for what he has done, for you as well as for me. But let us drop this subject for the present. You have not given me any information respecting Sir Felix's health.'

'He was very ailing for some time, ma'am, but he grew much better after we arrived at the castle; and Mrs. O'Connell told me that the great property he got at his lady's death would enable him to disencumber his estates, and sit down at ease for the remainder of his life.'

Just at this moment, two letters were brought in from Ireland, one for me and the other for Mary. As I saw her eagerness to peruse hers, I desired her to go to her own room with her letter, and leave me to read mine. It was from my uncle Sir Felix, and it was the first time I had attempted to read since my illness, having so far lost the power of sight, as not to be able to read even print, when I first began to recover. As my uncle always wrote like a lawyer—a very illegible hand—it was not without difficulty that I could pick out the meaning of his letter; nor did I fully understand it, after half an hour's poring over it.

When Mary returned, I desired her to read it to me. As she



had grown familiar with his hand while in attendance on my aunt, she found but little difficulty in deciphering it. The letter contained a most cordial invitation to myself and children to visit Mulgrave Castle at the earliest possible time. The present season my uncle thought a charming one for reviewing my former home, and he hoped I should find everything in as good order as when his dear brother presided there. To render the visit more agreeable to me, he said, he had already invited my mother and my sister Caroline, and also his old friend and mine, Monsieur de Grammont; and he hoped that in such society I might be able to renew all the delights of my childhood.

Oh, what a vision of bliss did this invitation open to me! It was too much of happiness! My fever returned for a few hours, but so slightly, as to indicate a great increase of strength. Yet I was not allowed to see my children for two days after.

When they were again permitted to come into my room, I found them habited in entire new suits of apparel, in the sweetest taste imaginable, *à la Française*. It was well this surprise did not occur earlier, for, as it was it almost turned my brain, thus to see my dear little ragamuffins so caparisoned, and transformed from skeletons to cherubs. 'Who has done this, Mary?' was my instant inquiry.

'I hope, ma'am,' said she, in her most deferential and modest manner, 'you will not be offended. But Monsieur de Grammont thought the season had changed so much since your illness, that the children must be suffering for want of a suitable change of dress; he therefore desired me to order whatever was necessary for the season, at a house which he named, saying that he would himself settle the bills for the present, as it was impossible for you to attend to them in your present state of health, and he could easily arrange the affair with you, when you were sufficiently recovered to receive him. I think he must have been at the shop and left orders beforehand; for when I got there, I found everything had been chosen and laid by, and several changes ordered of each article.'

My heart was so full, that I was unable to make any comment on what I heard; and after caressing the children, who were in boisterous spirits, I desired Mary to take them away.

It was not surprising that what I have related of the daily part performed by Monsieur de Grammont, for the comfort of myself and children, should affect me deeply, or that, after contemplating the metamorphoses of my children, I wept inexplicable tears as soon as I found myself alone. Oh, how I longed to be able to receive Monsieur de Grammont, and to thank him in person for his surpassing kindness;—and yet not surpassing for him,—it was his nature to be kind, and to do everything in the most perfect manner; and although his attentions were of the most zealous and extraordinary kind, I was resolved to consider them only such as he would have bestowed on any human being who needed them as much as I. I would not allow a single reminiscence to agitate me, or one tender thought to mingle with my gratitude, for did I not know that tenderness—

Is bliss, but to a certain bound?

I therefore endeavoured to wrap myself up in a cold and calculating gratitude, which should adjust the balance so nicely, as that nothing should be omitted that was due to Monsieur de Grammont for his zeal and attentions, and yet nothing offered in return, that could be construed into an appeal to our former relations. How truly are human beings 'Spirits, hid in veils!'

The deep and enduring sentiment at the bottom of my heart, that rendered all expression impotent, was to be thus converted into cold and tranquil expressions of acknowledgment, which must check any awakening of dormant affections. And was not this prudence? For how could I be so presumptuous as to imagine that the varied conflicts of life and death which I had passed through during a period of eleven years had touched me so lightly as to leave me unscathed, and essentially the same, and still capable of inspiring those sentiments which could alone justify me in cherishing my own?

While I was thus playing the casuist, with throbbing pulses and a shrinking heart, I received a small, externally elegant, note, which, as I recognised the hand of the writer, was soon torn open, and I read as follows:—

'Monsieur de Grammont presents his most respectful regards

to Mrs. Fitzgerald, and begs to offer her his fervent felicitations on the progress which he is informed she is making towards health. He would be most happy to be indulged with an interview with her for a few minutes, as soon as it may be permitted without injury. But although he has urgent reasons for this request, he entreats that it may not be granted, if there be the slightest apprehension of its proving hurtful to Mrs. Fitzgerald, in whose sufferings he has deeply participated, and in whose convalescence are wrapped up so many interests and hopes unutterably dear to all connected with her.

‘Hôtel de Grammont,  
May, 1827.’

The receipt of this note was an event which I at once felt to be replete with consequences, and yet such a request might have been expected even earlier. It was but a natural movement of courtesy to acquit itself of a conventional obligation. Why, then, not let it pass for what it was? But at least an answer must be returned, and after much effort, for I had not used my pen for two months, and had scarcely regained my sight, I wrote thus—

‘Mrs. Fitzgerald begs to acknowledge the receipt of Monsieur de Grammont’s note of this morning, and to assure him, that she could not allow any consideration for her health to deprive her of the pleasure of receiving his proposed visit at his first leisure. She owes him too much not to desire such an interview—far more, perhaps, than he can do; and although she is fully aware how little she will be able, in her present state of weakness, to do justice to the sentiments of gratitude which animate her, she feels that it will be the highest gratification to her to have an opportunity of expressing them.

• ‘Hôtel Montmorency.’

The morning of the morrow was fixed for this redoubted visit. Yes, that was the time that was to decide my fate for ever; either by filling the heavens with sunbeams, or by covering both earth and sky with ‘a darkness that might be felt!’ As my feelings arrived at this conclusion, I was startled at myself, for I

could not but observe that common sense was falling asleep; and that instead of the mere visit of courtesy, or perhaps of business, which had been arranged, imagination was converting it into an incident of doom. Where was that tranquil future that I had sketched for myself and my children, with which I was so lately satisfied, and which comprised but the simplest and most attainable objects? What had become of my thankfulness for the competent income that was now mine, and which was to obtain for me that which brought me originally to Paris? All this was for the moment forgotten, and the future was staked on the cast of a die—on a word—a look—a tone!

In such a world of nothings, imagination delights to revel; and while writing horoscopes in air, or tracing their shadows on the sands of the earth, fulfils its own peculiar vocation.

While tormenting myself thus with the vagaries of both fate and fancy, Fanchette, my late kind hostess of the *entresol*, was ushered into my room by Mary.

As she had never seen me since my illness but in bed, she approached the sofa on which I was reclining, with warm greetings and congratulations on finding me there. Her joyous tone, which in far different circumstances had been wont to infuse a momentary cheerfulness into my heart, was so associated with the suffering endured under her roof, that now, as it struck on my ear, it affected me like the touch of the torpedo; and I shivered as I sent a fearful glance of retrospection on the straw beds, and famishing diet, which had brought me face to face with death in a most fearful form.

Fanchette, with her accustomed quick perception of the feelings of others, saw the shock that passed over me, and exclaimed,—‘Ah, madame! the sight of me pains you! But I shall never forgive myself, if I am so unfortunate as always to remind you of the past. I assure you, madame, I am unable to sleep at night, even now, when I happen to think of you and your sufferings in my poor *entresol*.’ I was soon able to reassure Fanchette, and to thank her for all her kindness to me; not without a secret hope, that at some future and not distant time, I might be able to offer her something more valuable than words.



The retrospects which the sight of this good creature led me to make, again recalled to me the miraculous deliverances which had been wrought for me by that unseen hand, in which are the issues of life. For while I owed far more than I could ever repay, in gratitude and affection to the immediate instruments of my rescue from death, yet that surprising conjunction of events, by which the great results in human life are produced, can only be accomplished by Him who holds equal empire over the visible and invisible things of our complicated existence.

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### CHAPTER XXX.

I HAD been kept awake during the greater part of the night by harassing thoughts and conflicting feelings, and rose at a later hour than usual, unrefreshed and feverish ; for did I not know that, with a skeleton form too weak to hold itself erect, and with the paleness of death on my cheek, and 'the shadow of death' on my eyelids, I was rushing on fate in that coming interview?

Mary, with her accustomed interest, was endeavouring to invigorate my nerves, by placing me in my chair before an open window, when a gentle rap at the door of the ante-chamber announced Monsieur de Grammont.

Mary ushered him into the room, and withdrew. As I had determined to conceal my feelings, I endeavoured to assume a tranquil exterior. But it would not do. The smothered anxiety became a paralyzing oppression. As Monsieur de Grammont entered, I falteringly rose, and moved forward to receive him. Our eyes met—and in that look of unutterable tenderness and deep sympathy, with which we had been wont to meet so many years since. 'Helen!' was his only word of greeting; and though scarcely audible, the magic of his voice had reached my soul. I staggered, and should have fallen, but for the supporting arm that prevented it. Léonce led me to my chair, and, kneeling before me, buried his face in his hands for

some minutes in silence; during which we were both lost in feelings of tumultuous joy and sorrow. For had we not already, in a single glance, recognised in each other a record of those years of absence and of suffering to which we had both been consigned? And were we not once more restored to each other, and to those sentiments of deep and imperishable attachment which had been so long suppressed? And yet, when we attempted to speak, in what language were our feelings uttered? Not in words of love, or even of friendship; but in tears that would not be repressed.

As some degree of tranquillity returned, Monsieur de Grammont once more offered me his hand; that hand which had been twice offered before, and which was now accepted with unutterable gratitude, though I felt that I yet fluctuated betwixt life and death. An interval of many years was thus obliterated; yet I still struggled with an irrepressible emotion, which only tears could assuage. For what a miserable gift was I bestowing, in myself, on Léonce! Though our fate was now in our own hands, instead of in those of a prejudiced and inflexible uncle, we had still mutual misgivings of what our future might prove, and almost feared again to separate, lest some untoward occurrence might intervene, and prevent a reunion. Léonce, who knew much more of the mysterious power that had coiled itself around me than *I* could know, was well aware that I lived but on the sufferance of the Jesuit.

He looked very pale, and deep lines of thought and suffering were stamped on his fine face, rendering it, if possible, more than ever interesting to me. There was also an air of delicate health about him, which alarmed me; but when I inquired respecting it, he assured me it was occasioned only by the anxiety he had so long felt, for my restoration to health and to himself.

‘For what did I know of your feelings towards me?’ said he. ‘Time and circumstance, which wear out so many hearts, might not have spared yours. You had become a mother. Had maternal affection exhausted your heart of other affections? or might not sorrow and suffering so unparalleled as yours, have bereaved you of the power to love? It was thus I questioned; knowing, however, that an interview would decide my fate; for

I felt myself as *exigeant* as ever of that sympathy you had once bestowed on me, and which could alone satisfy my heart, and which, if wanting now, must leave me in an eternal isolation. But your unchanged heart averts that wretched fate. Oh, Helen!' he continued, in a suppliant voice, 'yon *must* recover, that you may bless me; you *must* recover, that you may also bless your children, and that we may return together to that dear home of your infancy where we first met, and where you taught me first to love.'

Dreams of early life thus awakened, all the sorrows of our past lives were for the moment buried in forgetfulness; and we began to realize the idea that we might once more find happiness on earth, spite of the power that, walking in darkness, still pursued me.

We turned our thoughts from this menacing evil to Him who is the well-spring of life, and in whom are treasured up all the sources of human felicity, both for time and eternity.

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On the following morning, by order of Monsieur de Grammont, an invalid carriage was brought to my door, in which I was placed on a bed, under a canopy of green silk, and taken ont to the Bois de Boulogne, Mary accompanying me, and Monsieur de Grammont riding on horseback by the side of my carriage.

The sweet zephyrs of May—that month of all others which wakes the heart and inspires happiness—fanned my brows, and infused into me new life. Meanwhile, Léonce, as my escort, was flitting backwards and forwards before my charmed sight, and words and tones of magic import were addressing themselves to my listening ear. All heaven and earth seemed bathed in bright beams of light and beauty.

In about a week, I was able to dispense with the invalid-carriage, and to ride ont in an ordinary chariot, with Léonce by my side. In another week, a furnished house was hired at 'St. Germain-en-Laye,' for my family and myself; near which, at the Hôtel d'Angleterre, Monsieur de Grammont took apartments for himself. This experiment formed the last of a series, which had been successfully arranged for my recovery. In the charming air of this salubrious locality we lived from morning

till night, as the weather permitted, in the open air; now rambling through the cool paths of its beautiful wood, or sauntering in the shades of its park, or contemplating the expanded and varied views, stretched out in distance, in the valley before its elevated terrace. The children grew far handsomer and stronger than I had ever seen them; and Mary and Rover also seemed to be as much benefited as Monsieur de Grammont and myself.

In a few weeks, a wonderful change had taken place in my appearance and health; and I was able to accompany Monsieur de Grammont on horseback every day, and to employ the intervals of this exercise in attentions to my children, and other long-neglected duties. At other times I listened to the reading of Léonce, whose volume, however, was only made tributary to our pleasure, by furnishing thoughts and themes for the endless conversation with which we every moment interrupted the enunciation of its pages. Happy as I had been at my first restoration to an intercourse that had always been blissful, it was not until strength had returned to my frame, and health to my pulses, that I was capable of understanding the full value of that blessedness which awaited, me in becoming the wife of Léonce. I had now no care left, except that of regaining such an amount of firm health as should enable me to enjoy the blessings of my lot. What a change! No wonder that, on looking at the past, I sometimes trembled for the permanency of that cloudless sky which now shed its heavenly brightness on everything around me.

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## CHAPTER XXXI.

MONSIEUR DE GRAMMONT availed himself of my improved health to return to Paris for a few days, in order to complete the arrangements preliminary to our marriage.

His Majesty Charles X, whose formal consent to the marriage of a peer of France was indispensable, had already signified his approbation of our union, but the documents remained to be signed.



Although I brought Monsieur de Grammont no dower, he insisted on settling a jointure on me, suitable to his own rank and fortune. The legacy of five thousand pounds sterling, left me by my aunt, he prevailed on me to settle irrevocably on my eldest daughter, Dora ; while he himself settled on Caroline a similar amount. He thus became a father to my children, in advance, investing and securing the property bestowed on them with all the precision and precaution of a practised man of business.

In becoming the wife of Monsieur de Grammont, I felt it necessary to myself that Monsieur de Carryfort should be called upon for an explanation of the insinuation so injurious to my honour and character which he had allowed himself to make in the only interview with him which I had ever had.

The Murphys, who, I had no doubt, were the authors of all the wrong I had sustained in his opinion, were both dead ; and before this, it must surely have been made known to Monsieur de Carryfort that they and the Brians were identical.

This latter fact ought to have led him to inquire into the justice of statements, influencing his opinion of me, which rested solely on their authority.

To make Monsieur de Grammont perfectly *au fait* on this, to me, important subject, I had placed in his hands, at his going to Paris, the journal of my life, so far as it had proceeded. It is unnecessary for me to say how much he had been affected by its perusal ; but his indignation at the conduct of Monsieur de Carryfort was extreme ; and he agreed with me, in the necessity of requiring from him an explanation of it.

Meanwhile his devotion to me and mine in absence was expressed daily to me by letter, in terms far stronger, and if possible more tender than ever. In one of his later letters, he gave me the following account of an interview which he had sought and obtained of Monsieur de Carryfort, agreeably to our mutual resolve.

‘After I had been at the Irish College, and extorted from the president information respecting those calumnies which had been foisted on your uncle as verities, I waited by appointment on Monsieur de Carryfort, yesterday morning, at his hôtel.

‘On arriving there, I was ushered into a charming *salon* on the ground floor, opening upon the lawn at the back of his house. Perhaps, my love, the same room as that in which you were once so disdainfully and cruelly treated by your uncle. He did not keep me waiting an instant; but, entering with a cordial air, walked straight up to me, with an extended hand, as if confident of my friendly grasp.

‘I had forgotten, that in requesting this interview, I had said nothing of its object, or I might have been more tolerant of the confidence with which he assured himself of my cordiality.

‘As he closely approached the spot on which I stood, like an automaton, to await his advance, his proffered, but unrecognised hand, fell to his side. After exchanging bows of courtesy, we stood before each other with cynical looks, and a rising hostility of expression. Monsieur de Carryfort broke the silence, by saying—“Am I to understand your request of an interview with me, Monsieur le Marquis, as one of business, or of courtesy?”

“Neither, Monsieur le Comte—unless justice may come under the category of business.”

‘We were both still standing, and growing each moment more and more erect.

‘Monsieur de Carryfort drew a chair towards me, and took one himself. He was evidently dubious of my object, and, determined not to commit himself, awaited what I had to say.

“Monsieur le Comte,” I began, “perhaps I owe you an explanation of the bearing which your presence inspires, and which I could not have allowed myself to assume, without the conviction that I should betray the cause which brings me here, were I to yield but for a moment to that natural reverence for age and distinction, which otherwise were so much your due.

“I, however, confess myself in a singular position, when I demand of you redress for a wrong which you have done to one of your own blood, without first exhibiting the authority on which I act. But you must give me credit in advance for a right to make the demand.”

“Monsieur le Marquis,” said the count, as he rose hurriedly from his chair, “your language is of a kind which I am not

accustomed to hear. Nevertheless as you have proffered an explanation of a *brusquerie*, which I am aware is foreign to your character, I will give you a hearing; for as yet, I have no idea of your drift."

"I had risen at the same moment with the count, and we stood before each other in a state of feeling not very favourable to explanation. But it was necessary to proceed, and I said to him—"As a preliminary to my embassy, Monsieur le Comte, I beg to say, that I am here at the request of your niece, Mrs. Fitzgerald, to obtain of you an explanation of some offensive words addressed by you to her, some months since, in this house. And having uttered a name rendered sacred by the virtues and sufferings of its possessor, I have probably recalled to your recollection, Monsieur le Comte, the interview in question. Is it necessary that I delineate that interview, or do you recollect the sentiments and language you addressed to Mrs. Fitzgerald on that occasion?"

"Monsieur le Marquis, your application to me on behalf of my niece for such an object as you profess, is, permit me to say, somewhat singular. Why has not my niece applied to me herself? Can it be supposed that an intercessor is necessary betwixt relatives so nearly connected? And on what grounds do you, sir, take upon yourself a service so Quixotic as that of demanding justice of me, in the name of my niece, for wrongs of which I am accused towards her?"

"I wave the sarcasm, Monsieur le Comte, with which you have embellished your demand of the grounds on which I have presumed to act in an affair so delicate. I have, however, already had the honour to inform you that I am here at the request of Mrs. Fitzgerald; and I beg to add, that I am here also on my own account, as the affianced husband of Mrs. Fitzgerald; for the honour of whose hand I should sue in vain, until the wrong that has been done her by you, sir, shall have been redressed. For although his majesty has already signified his approbation of our union, Mrs. Fitzgerald's keen sense of what is due to female honour makes it necessary to herself that the wrong in question be explained."

"Monsieur de Carryfort here advanced towards me, again with

an extended hand, which I could not a second time decline, saying, as he did so, "Monsieur le Marquis, the character in which you have now announced yourself gives you so undoubted a right to make the inquiries you have addressed to me, that I cannot a moment longer maintain a hostile feeling towards you on their account, or a reproachful thought of my niece for prompting you to make them. Question me as you please, therefore; I will answer you frankly."

"Ah, Monsieur le Comte, it is easy for me to question you of the injury which Mrs. Fitzgerald was compelled to endure—I would it were as easy to believe that it can be satisfactorily redressed. But how will you now atone to that lacerated heart, which, in want and sorrow, supplicated you in vain only to be heard in her own defence? What explanation can you offer to a pure and high-minded woman, whom you accused of making, forsooth, 'a dubious *début* in the gay city of Paris?' How will you explain that contempt for your kneeling and broken-hearted niece, which caused you to spurn her from your presence, expressing at the same time, a fear that in coupling your name with hers in an official document, for the benefit of her son, you had compromised your own respectability?"

"The count exhibited much agitation while I was thus forcing on him a retrospect so mortifying to himself. But endeavouring to carry it off with an air of *nonchalance*, he said, "Monsieur le Marquis, it is well that, having given you unbounded license in questioning me, I have also promised you perfect frankness in reply. Nevertheless, I fear it may be somewhat difficult to exculpate myself completely, either in your opinion or my own, from a charge of precipitancy in the judgment I formed of my niece. I cannot but regret the very serious mistake, under which I assumed that part towards her which you refer to, and which, I am now willing to acknowledge, was adopted on fallacious grounds. But I will endeavour, in extenuation of my mistake, to state to you briefly what those grounds were. Pray, Monsieur, do me the honour to resume your seat, and give me a hearing. You are, I presume, aware, being in the confidence of Mrs. Fitzgerald, that her object in coming to Paris was to claim access to her son; and that she had supplied herself with the



necessary documents to prove her right to make that claim. While these were in course of examination by the Council of the Irish College, and advancing rapidly towards success, several letters were received by the Council, from some one who must have been aware of the residence of the claimant, informing them that she was associated and living with notorious female swindlers. More than this, she was charged in these letters with having obtained fraudulently various sums of money from some friends of the *Marquis de Grammont*, whose name was influentially used in obtaining them." At this point I lost all self-command, and interrupting the count with irrepressible vehemence, exclaimed, "Stop, sir! I can hear no more. Answer me but one question, and I will exempt you from any other—Who was the writer of those iniquitous accusations? You do not reply, *Monsieur le Comte*." In fact, your uncle stood like one petrified by a sudden conviction of his own infatuated credulity, and a third time I asked who was the author, before I obtained the damning avowal that—he was indeed anonymous. "Anonymous! Was it, then, *Monsieur*, on *anonymous* assertion that you suffered the name and honour of your niece, a young, beautiful, and defenceless woman, to be prostrated in the dust? Had you forgotten the noble stock from which she sprang, and the pure blood that flowed in her veins? Was the daughter of such a mother as Lady Mulgrave—and, I will add, was the niece of *Monsieur de Carryfort*, to be thus accused and condemned, without evidence, without inquiry, and unheard, by a calumniator without a name? And yet, when she would have defended herself—when she would have explained to you every circumstance of her life—you spurned her from your presence, and commanded her from your house, with bitterness and insult that must have broken any female heart less heroic or less conscious of innocence than that of your transcendent niece!"

'The Count de Carryfort quailed under this additional retrospect of his injustice and inhumanity—but made no reply.

'At length, excessively irritated, I moved towards the door, saying, as I did so, "What message do you authorize me to bear from you, *Monsieur le Comte*, to Mrs. Fitzgerald?"

"*Monsieur le Marquis*," said the old man, "you have been

severe; but I will not complain of you, since you have placed in its proper light the neglect—for you must not call it by a harsher name—of which I have been guilty. But I was annoyed—disgraced—by Mrs. Fitzgerald's place of residence; for it is quite true that the women in whose house she was domiciled, were recognised swindlers.

“Was it, then, so very incredible, that the plausible charge of being leagued with them should have found countenance with me, after the credence which had been given to it by the college council?”

“Monsieur le Comte, as it was an impossibility that such a charge against Mrs. Fitzgerald could be founded in truth, I cannot admit of any excuse for giving it credence, for a single moment, on the ground of probability. What is impossible, can never become probable. If you had condescended to listen to the explanation which Mrs. Fitzgerald offered you, of her position in the Rue St. Florentin, you must of necessity have exculpated her from even the knowledge of any impropriety in the residence into which she had been thrown by accident. But, sir, you seem not yet to know that the woman who called herself by the name of Murphy, was but the Margaret Brian, who for so many years persecuted the late husband and family of your sister Lady Mulgrave; the suspected assassin who fired into the undefended cottage of your widowed niece; the blood-hound who pursued her everywhere; and finally, the fiend who defamed her name and honour, when she was severed from the protection of society by her poverty, without even giving offence to her only relative, and natural defender, in this (to her) foreign land. There cannot be,” I continued, “a single doubt that Margaret Brian was the author of at least some of the defamatory letters in question. For though criminating in them her own name, she could not injure it, having already attained that notoriety in evil courses which rendered it impossible for any additional infamy to damage her further, in a place where she is so well known as in Paris. But I have reason to believe that, besides Margaret Brian, another defamer, far more potent than she, was employing his influence, in conjunction with her efforts, to ruin your niece's reputation with the

college, and defeat her in her maternal object of obtaining an occasional sight of her son. You will pardon me, Monsieur le Comte, if I point out the Jesuit executor of the late Mr. Fitzgerald's will as this atrocious colleague of Margaret Brian; and when I further say that this individual was the prompter of Brian, goading her for his own purpose, to gratify her personal revenge, by making the daughter answerable for the fictitious wrongs of which she accused the father, I am but suggesting what I shall be able hereafter to prove to you. It was undoubtedly this Jesuit who, by communicating habitually with Brian, informed her of the progress of that adversity of which he had been the sole author. It was he who employed Brian, to watch the moment of Mrs. Fitzgerald's arrival in Paris, and to entrap her into her own house—he who prompted her daughter to the commission of a forgery, by which your niece was so impoverished as to be placed at the mercy of both her persecutors—and he, through whose secret agency the last remains of her property in Ireland were destroyed by fire.

“Brian, though thus apparently a tool in the hands of the Jesuit, was acting, *con amore*, on her own account, while she supposed herself meritoriously fulfilling the behest of her church in the destruction of a distinguished heretic.”

“When we meet, my dear Helen, I will inform you of the grounds (which will be new to you) on which I made these confident assertions. Your perturbed uncle, as I ceased speaking, said solemnly.

“Monsieur le Marquis, your suspicions of those wretched individuals as the calumniators of my niece never suggested themselves to me before. Can it be possible that such monsters have had any influence over my feelings! But I will atone for the wrong I have done Mrs. Fitzgerald. Pray mediate with her for me, Monsieur le Marquis, that she may be induced to receive me, and accept from me an apology, and an atonement also, which I have already resolved on making. I am but little acquainted with her—I hope she is not implacable, although I own it is but natural for her to entertain resentment against me.”

“You will have no difficulty,” I replied, “in making your peace with Mrs. Fitzgerald, Monsieur le Comte. She knows not

the meaning of the word resentment. She is no ordinary character; for while possessing the highest endowments of mind, she is a perfect child of nature, frank, forgiving, sincere, and pure. What, indeed, could have preserved her untarnished, in the atmosphere of a residence like Margaret Brian's, but that halo of innocence which encircles and defends the pure in heart?"

'The Count de Carryfort was either touched by a sense of wrong, or humbled by the conviction of it, I know not which. We parted with many expressions of regret on his part, and a promise of visiting you, my beloved Helen, within a week, at my present residence.'

The day after I received the foregoing, Monsieur de Grammont returned to his apartments in the Hôtel d'Angleterre, and in a few minutes after his arrival, was at my house in the park.

As ten days had passed since we met, he greeted me with excessive emotion, telling me I was so much improved in appearance, that I was Helen Mulgrave again, not only to the heart but to the eye, and that I must have been imposing on him when I called myself by another name.

As he had read my journal during his absence, I had a feeling of apprehension at meeting him, after all that its pages had disclosed of my devotion to himself. It seemed to me that my heart had now been so entirely laid open to him, that nothing remained to be revealed, and that we should both sink into vapidty.

But it was not so. The beaming confidence of an undoubting attachment, which now displayed itself in his every look and word, fell on my heart like the dew of morning on the parched earth.

Léonce, while commenting with me on the statements which he had made to my uncle, informed me, to my utter astonishment, that during his stay in Paris, he had had an interview with the surviving daughter of Brian (*alias* Murphy), who, for a valuable consideration which he offered her, had been induced to place in his hands the letters of her mother's Irish correspondents, amongst which he found many of the Jesuit's letters; and though there was a visible break in the sequence, enough of it remained to justify much more than he had asserted respecting



the part which the Jesuit had borne, in conjunction with Brian, relative to myself. The revelations of these letters, he said, disclosed a plot of the most diabolical kind, and damning to its author, although wrapped up in an obscure and ambiguous phraseology, which could only be deciphered by a man of the world.

‘But it is my intention,’ he said, ‘as soon as we are indissolubly united, to take R  nel in hand, and deliver him over to judicial investigation, on the ground of that apparently *forged will*, which has been made the instrument of your persecutions. The experiment might prove unsuccessful ; but it would show to the world at least one instance of the nature and extent of that unhallowed power which the Romish church confers on her priests ; and while thus serving the cause of a secular justice, would also exhibit the desecration and mockery which are made of a religion called Christian, by the practices of its own priests.’

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## CHAPTER XXXII.

MY uncle arrived at St. Germain, as he proposed, and in an interview which I had with him alone, he made the most ample acknowledgments of the injustice he had done me ; and placing in my hands the letters on which his erroneous impressions had been founded, he exclaimed, ‘Burn them, when you have satisfied yourself of their author. I wish it was as easy to obliterate the wrong they have done, as it is to destroy them.’ On examining the letters, I found it impossible to believe otherwise than that Murphy herself, and the Jesuit, had been the writers of them. As I traced these proofs of a malignity so inhuman, I wondered that I had survived its effects ; and still more, that the damage of it, which had so nearly destroyed both myself and family, should have been so speedily repaired. Murphy’s end was untimely ; and the universal history of crime proves that there is a retribution, even in this life, which is seldom, if ever, evaded by the criminal.

When my uncle had been apprized of the horrid manner of Mrs. Murphy's end, he exclaimed, that it galled him to the heart to reflect on his having been made the tool of such a fiend; and that he could no otherwise atone to me for the wrong of which he had been guilty, than by making me his heiress, and leaving his whole property to me—which, indeed, he said he had already done, by his will, a copy of which he placed in my hands for perusal.

'You will find,' said he, 'that I have encumbered my estates with only an annuity of twelve thousand francs per annum to your sister Caroline, making no provision for my sister, Lady Mulgrave, because I know that the Baron de Wallenstein, my brother, has already provided for her, in case of her surviving him.'

As he ceased speaking, I felt a painful oppression on me, and could not help saying, 'My dear uncle, I am for ever indebted to you for your kind intentions; but do not thus crush me with your bounty. Take back your estates; I shall not want them; and it seems to me that so immense a donation will cause me to feel as though it had been exacted of you. Take back your gift, therefore, my dear uncle, and let me have the pleasure of feeling that we are reconciled friends, without so costly a pledge of it.'

It was in vain I thus expressed the pain I felt at the greatness of the obligation imposed on me. My uncle replied that what he had done was irrevocable, and that he hoped it could not but be a satisfaction to me, on reflection, to know that thereby my son, to whom hereafter his estates would pass, would be thus provided for, if the Jesuit should fail to restore to him his father's estates.

'I know well,' he continued, 'the excellent man who is about to become your husband, and how much he is above all sordid views. Nevertheless, it ought to be some little gratification to you to know that you do not come entirely portionless to him.'

I then told him of the settlement which Monsieur de Grammont had made on my daughters, at which my uncle shed tears, as he congratulated me on my happy prospects.

In spite of all this, I had still a consuming anxiety at my

heart for a sight of my son, whom I had never yet been allowed to see. Sometimes I fancied he might be dead, or ruined in health, or mind, by the severity of the discipline through which I knew he must pass.

When Monsieur de Grammont returned, I of course related to him what had passed between my uncle and myself. He was very much impressed with the magnanimity of my uncle, in the ample and unhesitating regrets he had expressed. But I fancied he would rather I had been without his estates, which, he said, had come too late ; and that for himself, he must drink deep of the waters of Lethe, before he could think of those sufferings, without bitterness, which it had been so much in my uncle's power to alleviate, but which he had preferred to aggravate. 'Nevertheless,' he continued, 'man must not sit in judgment on his fellow. We know not the peculiar organization of that mind which, without becoming actually criminal, unconsciously falls short of virtue and humanity.'

Monsieur de Grammont had consulted Mary respecting the position and circumstances of my good Fanchette ; and having informed himself thereon, settled an annuity on her, which left to her option the continuance or relinquishment of her present laborious occupation. She was overwhelmed with gratitude at this provision for her old age—having already attained her sixtieth year—and she came to St. Germain expressly to thank her benefactor ; when, with her own characteristic vivacity, she wept, and laughed, and wept again, in endeavouring to express her gratitude.

It was thus that Monsieur de Grammont relieved me of every worldly solicitude, for others as well as for myself ; and I had the prospect of being able to assume the beloved name that awaited me, almost without a care. I had lived so many years in loneliness of heart, that to be again in possession of that felicity which arises from a reciprocation of thought and feeling with a companionable mind, was of itself happiness. Yet thus surrounded—almost overwhelmed, with happiness—both in possession and in prospect, undefinable anxieties sometimes assailed me, which I could only relieve by prayer, or conciliate with tears. The storms of my life had indeed apparently subsided,

but 'the cloud returned after the rain,' and the shadows of the past often fell on my path. Even in my brightest moments, in the society of him whose fine taste embellished every thought he uttered, and whose ardent spirit infused energy into the very nothings of discourse, the question, 'Can this last?' would whisper itself to my soul, and quicken enjoyment to agony. But how can *he* be expected to step firmly who has for years been doomed to walk over quicksands, or tread the brink of an abyss?

I had been inured to feel the supports of earth so often sinking from under me, that I had not yet learnt to plant my foot securely on a rock, and hardly to repose in peace, under the blessed 'Gourd,' which 'celestial hands had reared around me, and which, as yet, had disclosed no 'worm at its root.'

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As there was still much preliminary business to be attended to before our marriage could take place, Monsieur de Grammont returned again to Paris. The day after his arrival there, Monsieur de Carryfort waited upon him at his hôtel, in due form to announce to him his having made me his heiress, and to express his fervent approbation of his becoming his nephew; proffering, at the same time, to perform the service at the wedding ceremony of giving me away, in case my uncle, Sir Felix, who had volunteered to perform it, did not arrive in time.

It had been proposed by my uncle, that the marriage should take place from his house; and my mother and sister had been invited to meet me there, with the Baron de Wallenstein, who had expressed himself desirous of assisting at the ceremony, although his official duties at the court of Vienna rendered it doubtful whether he might be able to accomplish his wish.

My dear children had not yet been informed of the coming event; yet their chief subject of thought, of talk, and of inquiry, was their '*cher* Monsieur de Grammont,' as they called him. It seemed, indeed, as though he were the very object and impulse of life to our whole household—Mary not excepted.

To add to our accumulating joys, Sir Lucius Mac Neil and my sister Dora were expected daily in England, and it was hoped they might arrive there in time to reach Paris, and assist at the ceremony so anxiously anticipated.



## CHAPTER XXXIII.

WE were already in July, and only a few days remained betwixt us and the wedding day, when as I sat at a window of my house at St. Germain, a carriage at full speed drove up to my door. Léonce sprang out of it, and, absorbed in him, I saw, for the first instant, only him; but as, instead of entering with his usual bound into the hall to meet me, he turned to speak to some one whom he had left in the carriage, I peered into it to see whom it might be, and beheld my mother, my sister Caroline, and my own dear lost child! In a moment we were locked in each other's arms!

This restoration of objects so long lost and so dear to me, was like a resurrection from the dead; for until very lately, I had cast away every hope of seeing them again in this world. And now, to meet them under the circumstances in which they found me was an event to dream of, but scarcely to realize.

Still, here we were, once more together; and though he who had been the key-stone of the arch on which everything that constituted our family felicity had once rested, was no longer amongst us, he had been replaced by another, who had become a pillar of our house, and was no less a centre of attraction, round which our affections congregated almost in idolatry.

My son had been torn from me about a year ago, at a time when I could least spare anything I loved. Since then, I had passed through the severest trials, and attained the highest earthly happiness of which our nature is capable. As crowning events to this, the restoration of my son, and the sight of my dear mother and sister, left me for the moment nothing more to wish for. My happiness was so great, that as I passed from the embraces of my mother and child to those of my sister and Léonce, I felt as the patriarch Jacob had once felt, and exclaimed with him, 'Now let me die!'

My little Frederic was at first formal and timid, and scarcely seemed to remember me; but after I had caressed him awhile,

he looked earnestly in my face, and began to cry. When his sisters appeared, there was again a little dubiousness about him ; but the vivacity with which they clasped him in their arms soon awakened recollection, and the young trio were not long in becoming boisterously happy.

Léonce then gave me a history of the efforts by which at length, unknown to me, he had circumvented the Jesuit executor, but which had not been accomplished without applying to Charles X. himself. Fortunately, the application was made at a time when all Paris was in a ferment respecting Jesuit intrigue, which, it was universally asserted, was making its way into private families, as well as public bodies, and destroying their peace. A project was proposed, even in the Chamber of Deputies, for expelling the Jesuits from Paris, which was rendered nugatory, just as it was expected to pass into law, by the discovery that, as the law of France ignored the existence of the Jesuits, it was a practical solecism to propose to expel them.

When Léonce had left the room, and I was able to contemplate, with undivided attention, the traces of time on my mother and sister, they both seemed to be somewhat impaired by it ; but before an hour had passed, I had become so familiar with the slight shades of difference, that I no longer saw anything in them at all at variance with my doting recollection of what they had formerly been.

My mother expressed a hope, that a bank-note which she had sent by post, at the time I applied to the Baron de Wallenstein for pecuniary assistance, had been useful to me. She had sent it, she said, unknown to her brother, who had grown parsimonious, and could not be prevailed on to believe that my destitution could be literal. 'I hoped,' said she, 'that the baron's incredulity might be well-founded ; but I knew the veracity of my dear Helen, and dared not doubt, though I shuddered in believing, her statement.'

Thus carried back to those fearful sufferings which had passed away, I could answer but by tears, and only told my mother, while I thanked her for her bounty, that I had never received her remittance.

My mother was very much affected at recognising Mary as

one of the household, who, on her part, shed tears, as she kissed my mother's hand.

When Rover was brought to her, the dog instantly recollected both her and my sister, and gave them so hearty a greeting in his own way, that laces and silks were placed in no small peril by him. But my mother was so delighted with his honest joy, that she would not allow it to be checked.

In a few hours I was again alone, for even my darling boy had departed, to return to the college for the present; with a proviso, however, secured by Monsieur de Grammont, that he should be allowed to visit me occasionally.

There is a peculiar feeling of isolation immediately succeeding the departure of those we love, how sure soever we may fancy ourselves of meeting them again soon. On this occasion, I had not been able, as Léonce whispered his parting words of tenderness, to withhold my tears. It was a childishness for which I gravely remonstrated with myself, as soon as he was out of sight. Almost sated with happiness, I was already spoilt by it, and could not endure a moment's suspension of it. I am ashamed to record that my weakness so affected Léonce, that although it was too late, after escorting my mother and sister to the Rue d'Anjon, to return to me again that evening, he was at my breakfast table at eight o'clock on the following morning.

There were no railroads in those days, or this would not have been a remarkable feat of locomotion. But a ride of twelve miles on horseback before breakfast, on a scorching July morning, for so paltry an object as that of drying the tears, not of sorrow, but of weakness, would have put me ill at ease with myself, had I not been so great a gainer by the enterprise. Monsieur de Grammont brought with him an invitation to me from my uncle De Carryfort, to join my mother and sister immediately at his house, and to remain there until my wedding day.

As my arrangements for leaving my children for a few weeks with their governess at St. Germain were already made, I was soon prepared for removal. But Léonce and I did not set out for Paris together without lingering looks at a place to which I was so much indebted for the treasures of health which I was

bearing away with me, and in which we were leaving our children.

It was not possible for me to enter my uncle De Carryfort's house, shadowed as it was by dark memories, without deep emotion. Yet, after the first few hours, I found it a delightful, and an affecting change to be in Paris, and in a family circle of near relatives.

I was now already within the vestibule of happiness; yet my experience of life had taught me, in speculating on the future, to be more fearful of failure than hopeful of fruition. Is not the Jesuit still on my track? I shudderingly asked myself. Perhaps Léonce had similar feelings; for as I met his serious gaze, he exclaimed, with anxiety, 'After the twentieth, it will no longer be a hope—a vision—but a reality. Life will be spared till then. Let us not doubt it! After that, we will brave the Jesuit in concert!'

The day of fate was so near, that we began to feel impatient for the arrival of the distant guests invited to its celebration; but we approached its very eve without hearing anything of my sister's arrival from India, or of the Baron de Wallenstein's, or Sir Felix Mulgrave's.

Happily, at eleven o'clock on that evening, a hasty messenger from Meurice's hôtel came to announce to Monsieur de Carryfort, that Sir Lucius Mac Neil and his family had arrived there. The Baron de Wallenstein, from Vienna, was announced shortly after, and our party now only wanted Sir Felix; but as Monsieur de Carryfort had offered to officiate in his stead, we were able to proceed without him, if he should not arrive before morning.

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## CHAPTER XXXIV.

I ROSE at the dawn on the following morning, to look out on the eastern sky for prognostics of the weather. It had a lowering appearance, but the dew was heavy on grass and flower, which was a favourable indication; and the birds were singing



so merrily in the garden overlooked by my chamber window, that I returned to my bed again, in full hope of sunshine, to gild the day so full of promise to the future. I fell asleep so soundly as not to dream, and only awoke at seven, roused by a band of music under my window. Amongst other airs that were performed, was that of, 'Now, with grief no longer bending,' &c. As it struck on my delighted ear, I heard in it the voice of Léonce, who, I knew, must have specially ordered it for the occasion.

The words of the song naturally led me to contrast the present with the past, and the antithesis was so violent as to inspire distrust of the future; for the idea of the *Jesuit* still haunted me like a spectre, although happiness had never before hailed me under circumstances so promising. But under the influence of sweet sounds, I passed from this distrust to joyous hope; and as my heart waked to devotional gratitude, I adored him who delivers us out of the furnace of affliction.

As Mary answered my bell, she informed me that Monsieur de Grammont was already in my boudoir, awaiting me there; and anxious to see me as soon as possible. I was not long in making my appearance. As I entered the room, he was pacing it up and down with quick steps. I was struck by the expression of his countenance, and feared that some untoward occurrence must have taken place. Trembling, I knew not why, I looked inquiringly at him.

'Fear nothing,' said he, 'I am the messenger of frightful intelligence, which, though it must shock, will not afflict you. The last of those fearful beings, that for years have haunted your path, has vanished for ever. The Jesuit is no more.'

He paused as I covered my face, overcome by the unexpected intelligence. In a few seconds he proceeded.

'A horrible mystery hangs over this apparently premature death, which seems to have been produced by poison, received in the sacramental wafer at the bed-side of a dying man. The name of that man, you will hardly guess. It forms a singular coincidence with past events.

'The man is said to be *the parish priest*, who formerly, in league with Brian, carried off your father's jewels, and was sup-

posed eventually to have murdered her. You are aware that the homicide had been under the protection of the church, ever since that occurrence, in a quarter of Paris inaccessible to the police. Finding himself dying of an incurable malady, but still capable of crime, he contrived, in receiving the last sacraments from the hands of Father Rénel, whom he had solicited to administer them, to introduce poisoned wafers, both for himself and his victim, so that they are both dead. This is all that has yet transpired on the subject. I have had a moment's interview with your uncle De Carryfort, this morning, respecting it; and he is of opinion, with me, that Frederic may now be easily released from the guardianship of the remaining executor; when both the dear child and his estates will come under our own immediate guardianship.'

I was so much stunned by the suddenness of the information I had received, that I did not at the first moment perceive all its momentous consequences to myself. But an instant's reflection showed me that, by the death of the Jesuit, I was at once rescued both from Popery and the 'grasp of the priests.' The galling chains that had so long fettered my very soul fell off as by an angel's touch, and the profoundest joy would have taken possession of my heart, if it had not been checked by the horrid manner in which my deliverance had been effected. Léonce and I sat awhile in silence, and forgetfulness that it was our wedding morning.

As the recollection of it recurred, the coincidence of the day and the deliverance increased our happiness. The striking of a clock reminded us that time was advancing, and that we might be too late for the appointed hour. I was therefore compelled to insist on Léonce's instant departure, who, while he affected to rebel, after blessing and thanking me for the part I was about to assume, in words never to be forgotten, hurried away.

Scarcely had the door closed after him, when my sister Dora entered. What a meeting was ours, after so many years of absence, and so much suffering! When the first transports of our greeting were over, Dora, with all the juvenile gaiety of former years, exclaimed, 'And so, my little Nelly, after having been so long in the crucible, you are come out of it alive, and

are really going to marry your first, if not your only love! Charming! Your husband, too, a knight of romance from the realms of fancy, if he were not so decidedly and visibly a reality, that one is delighted to acknowledge the supremacy of fact over fiction. You must permit a little effusion of nonsense, my darling Nelly, on this happy morning, as a measure of safety to my heart, which is so full of joyous agitation at this happy termination of your sorrows, that I must either faint or cry, if obliged to suppress its emotions. I have so long doted on Léonce, that now he is about to become my brother, my love for him exceeds all bounds. When he first arrived amongst us in India, he was in a most deplorable state of melancholy, and beset at the same time by many captivating young women, whom only such a preoccupied heart as his could have resisted. At that time, seeing how wretched he was, I should have been happy had he been able to make choice of one of them. Only think, dear Nelly, what a world of mischief I should have occasioned, had I succeeded in my little innocent efforts to make him forget you! I tremble to think of it. Oh, how much better Providence orders our affairs than we could order them for ourselves!

‘When he had been with us about two months, we heard of your having become a widow, and of your utterly ruined fortunes, both at the same time, but almost two years after the death of Mr. Fitzgerald. The news agitated us all to an excessive degree, but Monsieur de Grammont was so changed by it that we hardly knew him. He was like one raised from the dead. The chronic maladies of mind and health, which had so long been depressing him, all disappeared at once, and he became active and energetic, in spite of the climate. Within a week after this news, he was on his way to England. I should like to hear an account of your first meeting, Nelly, but this is no time for retrospect.’

While listening to my dear Dora, and gazing on her bright and charming face, I had forgotten time; but recollecting ourselves, we abruptly terminated our interview.

After a short interval in my own chamber, I returned again to the boudoir, and found Léonce waiting there to take me to the

breakfast-room, where we joined our family circle, amongst whom was the Baron de Wallenstein, whom I had never before seen.

My two uncles were most *affectionate* in their reception of me, and seemed to vie with each other in the magnificence of their wedding gifts to *the bride of the Marquis de Grammont*. Why did thought wander, at the moment of receiving them, amongst the frightful spectres of the past?

My dear mother was of the breakfast party, looking pale and serious.

As Léonce and I bent before her, to ask her benediction, she joined our hands, and blessed us in her own quiet tender manner, saying that if it were permitted to the departed to revisit earth, she had no doubt the spirit of another parent was hovering over us, with blessings as fervent as her own. This sweet flight of fancy and of hope elevated our thoughts to a higher sphere, while the affecting reminiscence, awakening thoughts of him we had lost, made us feel anew how much, even in the midst of happiness, we had still to deplore.

Sir Lucius Mac Neil, whom I had not yet greeted, was at my side, as my mother ceased speaking, with an offering of warm and brotherly wishes for Léonce and myself. As our guests were beginning to arrive, my uncle De Carryfort led me to the saloon, the remainder of the family immediately following us. I was so happy as to observe amongst the first arrivals, my old friend Mr. O'Callaghan, and to receive from him the warmest felicitations of his kind heart.

Many other charming persons crowded round me, to offer, with an *empressement* and a grace peculiarly French, the compliments of the occasion.

The carriages were soon announced, and we were, in a few minutes, at the Ambassador's Chapel.

Our marriage had been arranged in the English fashion, but at the entrance to the chapel I found an avenue formed of young French girls, dressed in white, with chaplets on their heads, each bearing a basket of flowers, which, as I passed along, they strewed in my path.

This is an ordinary French practice, but being unexpected by



me, it affected me so much, that had not my uncle, De Carryfort, been at my side, I should not have been able to preserve my composure, as the harsh contrasts of my life rushed on my memory.

Bishop L——, at that time chaplain to the embassy, awaited our arrival in the chapel, and in a few minutes Léonce and I stood together before the altar of God.

The ceremony was soon performed, when I had the tearful felicity of being hailed by Léonce as 'his own dear wife.'

Shortly after our return to the Rue d'Anjou, we took leave of our family and friends there, and set off towards an ancient family château of Monsieur de Grammont's, near Auxerre, on the Yonne, about twenty miles south of Paris, accompanied only by Mary and a personal servant of my husband's.

As we cleared the outskirts of the city, the sun shone resplendently on the fields and foliage that sprang into view, and we bowled along in a trance of unutterable delight.

It was the anniversary of the day on which we had first met, at Mulgrave Castle, twelve years before; and as we looked back and recalled that day, so eventful to us both, we were led to glance at the sufferings and the happiness of which it had been the fruitful source.

In doing so, my own attention was especially arrested by the effect which our family intercourse with Léonce had had on the religious opinions of so many of our circle. For although he was both an unproselyting and tolerant Protestant, yet the depth of his information, the force of his arguments, and the moderation of his statements, brought so much inquiry into play, that to him might be traced the secession from the Romish church of at least four persons in our family, whom the truth had made free. What a trophy for him to incorporate with his family honours, if, indeed, it may be permitted to speak of associating such a triumph with the perishing distinctions of earth!

Monsieur de Grammont and myself, now that our personal anxieties had subsided, began to feel the blessedness of union of opinion and feeling in the great and paramount concerns of religion. Léonce was no idle talker on sacred things; he felt too deeply their importance to speak of them, or even to allude

to them, without reverence. He had nothing about him of what is ordinarily understood by 'religious cant.' A mere verbal, conventional, and ostentatious piety, as foreign to the sincerity and simplicity of an humble faith in divine truth, as to good sense and good taste. If religion consisted in the mere adoption of its dialect and its technicalities, it would be easy to become pious. But if 'pure and undefiled religion' is our aim, and we descend into the deep of the heart as the temple of it, we shall find that we have a daily, hourly battle to wage with ourselves, which is as humiliating as it is difficult of achievement; and in which we are conquerors only through faith in Him 'who giveth us the victory.'

French Protestantism had, at the period of which I am speaking, a peculiar character, which I hardly know how to describe faithfully. There was in it a latitude of charity, an absence of exclusiveness, and yet a fervour of zeal in its professors, which, while it laboured, like the disciples of a new faith, to establish and extend itself, was yet so unassuming and tolerant that you at once recognised in it the spirit of Him who came not to judge, but to save. The true Christian feeling seems indeed everywhere to be that of forbearance with mere error of opinion, rather than persecution of it.

Monsieur de Grammont had been for years a sincere disciple of the Protestant faith in France, which, though countenanced at this time by the government of Charles the Tenth, and assisted by annual supplies from its treasury, was nevertheless, in various localities, 'persecuted, afflicted, and tormented.'

Léonce's absence from his native land for many years, had prevented him from lending his name and influence to its promotion. But now, as he was about to live at home, he traced out for himself extensive projects of usefulness to it, in which, feeling that we should be 'labourers together,' he promised himself the happiness of assisting its growth; for he considered the cause of Protestantism to be the cause of civil and religious liberty, the cause of morals, and the cause of truth.

In views and feelings such as these, Léonce and I were perfectly in unison; and while we hoped and cherished the belief that we were heirs together of eternal life, we deeply felt that

we were but pilgrims and strangers upon earth, journeying towards a final home. As we poured out our hearts to each other during our journey, we felt that we were entering on a new era, and a happier world; and had not the adversities of the past been written ineffaceably in our hearts, we might have forgotten the tenure on which all the felicity of the earth is held. But, although a chastening perception of it mingled with our feelings and restrained our joy, we dared not repine at that tenure; for is not life itself transient as a vapor that 'appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away?' Yet the conscious eternity of our spirits inspired deathless hopes, as we discerned afar that future world, in which there 'shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying.'

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[The following letter by MARY, as it forms somewhat of a sequel to the foregoing tale, will not, perhaps, be wholly unacceptable to the reader.—EDITOR.]

Château de Grammont,  
July 22d, 1827.

Dear Mrs O'Connell,

I hope, ma'am, you have not thought me negligent in being so long in writing to you the account you asked me for in your last kind letter.

I hope Sir Felix is well, though from his not arriving in time to my dear lady's wedding, I am afraid he is not. Please, give my best duty to him.

Great and happy changes here, dear Mrs. O'Connell! Our dear Miss Helen, that once was, after suffering worse than any martyr ever since her first marriage with a gentleman quite unsuitable to her, is at last married to that dear Marquis de Grammont, who ought to have been her husband from the first. As I have very little time at present, I do not intend to write a long letter, but only just to give you an idea of how our troubles have at last ended. The Count de Carryfort, after treating my

dear lady, his own niece, worse than an impostor, and only because she was poor, turned about on seeing that the marquis had offered her his hand, and actually made her his heiress. I never saw such a regular turn-about in my life. I wonder he was not ashamed of himself; but he seemed to forget himself entirely in the grandeur of the match, although the marquis was a Protestant; and on the wedding morning he presented such a magnificent present of diamonds to the bride, that I couldn't help crying at sight of them, when I was packing them up, to think how glad she would have been, when she and the dear children were starving to death, to have had but the smallest amongst them to buy bread with. But this is a strange world, Mrs. O'Connell, where the love of money makes people forget what is so far before it—the love of their neighbour. But when people forget their own flesh and blood, it is quite unnatural and monstrous! The Baron de Wallenstein, another uncle of my lady's, gave her a complete set of emeralds; and rings, and bracelets, and coronets without end, came in from all quarters. My heart swells while I write this, to think that none of these uncles and bountiful givers came to her help when she wanted it. My lady herself, dear blessed creature, cares nothing about ornaments; nor is her beauty of a kind to require them. She is more handsome now, I do assure you, than she was when she was sixteen, though she has a very sad look at times, as she always had, you know. I had myself the pleasure of dressing her for her bridal; and a sweet dress it was; white and silver, as simple as hands could make it, by a French *modiste*, and a splendid gossamerlike lace veil, falling from the crown of her head over her beautiful shoulders, with a tiara of large pearls (the marquis's gift) mixed with orange blossoms. Oh, I shall never forget the sight, when I saw her and the marquis standing before the altar—both so handsome!

The day before the wedding, a party was made from the hôtel of the Count de Carryfort, to the hôtel of the marquis, in the faubourg, and I was allowed to attend my lady there. It was a most splendid day, and when our carriages arrived at the hôtel, we were received in great state. All the men-servants were in rich liveries, and so many of them, and so polite.



After we had gone over the house—(I say we, for though I did not, of course, walk into the rooms with my lady, I walked after her, and saw everything she saw)—well, as I was saying, after we had gone over the house, we came to the picture gallery, at the upper end of which was a whole length picture, with a curtain of crimson velvet before it, lined with white satin.

When it was drawn aside, what should I see, but a life-size painting of my lady, which the marquis had had taken of her by an artist he sent to Ireland, some years since, expressly for that purpose. I remember hearing of it at the time, and my lady had reason not to forget it, though I had quite forgotten it, till I saw the painting uncovered, and Miss Helen Mulgrave, in white muslin and myrtle blossoms, looking just as she did when I put her on that dress to go to a ball at Cork.

I was never tired of standing before it; and it was so like her, that I almost dropped my curtesy to it when I first looked at it. My dear lord, as he now is, has an apartment fitted up in his hotel for my lady's children and their governess—five or six most pleasant rooms, overlooking one of the gardens. I thought there was no end to his kindness; and indeed there is not. I cannot tell the half of what I have seen of his fondness for my lady, and her children, too. But I must not forget to tell you that the Jesuit Executor is dead—they say of poison. But no matter what it was; the world is well rid of him now, and the consequences to my dear lady will be very great, and she is likely to get Master Frederic out of the college; and all the family are likely to have their own again. Besides this, my lady will now be made, through the interest of the marquis, guardian to her son. What a beautiful thing power is, when it is used to do good! May God long continue to my lord and lady all their possessions and fine qualities, till they are ready for a better world! I am sure you will say amen to that, and I must soon write *finis* to my letter, which is getting too long.

I have laid down my pen a bit, just to read an English Paris paper, *Galignani's*, and I learn from it, that the Jesuit and the priest, I mean the Irish parish priest, were both poisoned; but it is thought that the Jesuit, who was in full health—while the

priest was already a dying man—had no thought of dying. But the parish priest, a cunning sort of fellow, found out that the Jesuit had a design upon his life, in order to get hold of some jewels which the priest had, and would not give up to him: and he thought he would be up with him, and secretly provided a poisoned wafer, which he contrived, by some sleight of hand, to exchange for the one which the Jesuit had got for himself. Of course, the Jesuit died in great agonies; the priest lived an hour or two after him.

It has just come into my head, that the jewels must have been my master's, Sir William Mulgrave's. It makes my blood run cold, to think of the two wretched men, both deliberate murderers, receiving their death through the sacrament, that, according to their pretensions, was to save their souls!

But I have not yet told you anything about our beautiful Château de Grammont, where we are at present staying—that is, my lord and lady and myself, and one town servant, my lord's valet.

All the servants here are old-fashioned, and all Protestants, as my lord will have no others upon his estates, for the sake of peace and harmony in the kitchens. They are all simple country people; and, although they are clever servants, can neither read nor write, except the housekeeper and the butler, who read the Scriptures in the housekeeper's room to them daily; and they are so fond of their lord, although they never give him his title, but call him Monsieur de Grammont, or *notre cher Monsieur*. Titles are quite out here—but I shall always call my lady the marchioness, for I like the sound of it, and she is so well entitled to it. I was always sure, from my dreams and other tokens, that she would some time or other have her due.

The château is a beautiful house, though a very ancient place, and, like our Mulgrave Castle, has haunted rooms in it.

I have such a beautiful *chambre à coucher*—that means a bedroom—with curtains, and every comfort; and it is so near to my lady's room, that I can answer her bell in a moment, when she rings. The house is very large, and has been lately fitted up for a great party, which is expected here in about a fortnight. First, there are my lady's two uncles, the count and the baron,

and next, Lady Mulgrave and Miss Caroline; then, Sir Lucius Mac Neil and his lady and four children, and last, though not least, the two Fitzgeralds and their governess; and as every one will bring servants with them, there will be a fine housefull of us, when all are assembled; besides Fanchette, who is coming to visit the servants, and Mr. O'Callaghan to my lord. I ought to have mentioned him first, but I am sure he is too good to care for it.

But we are to have a fortnight to ourselves first, for I heard the marquis say to my lady, that till his own dear fortnight was passed, he would not receive Charles X. himself. My lady and he walk about the park and grounds every day, and ride out together, and have their evenings to themselves, as they have caused it to be announced in the neighbourhood that they do not receive company until the arrival of their friends from Paris.

When we arrived here on the wedding-day, we were received with bands of music, and we entered the château under a triumphal arch, and my lady stepped from her carriage into the house on roses and myrtles. The butler and the housekeeper are both elderly people, and were in the service of my lord's father and mother before the revolution; and it would have done your heart good to see how they were dressed, when they stood at the door to receive us. I thought, to be sure, some of the court had got to the château before us; though, on second thoughts, I was sure none of the court of Paris dressed in their fashion. I wish I had time to describe to you, dear Mrs. O'Connell, how their silver-white hair was disposed of round their dear old wrinkled faces; the butler with a long queue, and the housekeeper with a high cushion on her head.

I am afraid I am very straggling in my account; but you must excuse me, I have been here so short a time, and my head is almost turned with happiness.

On the wedding morning, just before my lady went down to breakfast, after I had dressed her, and was standing looking at her; she came across the room to me, and with tears in her eyes, put into my hand the sweetest little pocket-book I ever saw, full of beautiful prints, and with silver clasps. Inside was

a bank bill for a thousand francs, which I never saw till this morning, for I did but just open it on the day I received it, and was so taken up with the pictures, that I looked no further; so I knew nothing of the bank note, and I have not yet thanked my lady for it. I must now wait till her bell rings before I can go to her, and I am sure, I shall never be able to thank her as I ought.

I hope Sir Felix will come here, and meet his many relations while they are at the château; although to be sure, it is a long journey for him; but as he was not at the wedding, my lady has written to invite him here, and she and my lord both intend to return his visit at Mulgrave Castle. I have just been to the window, to look out for them, as they have been out for several hours, and I see the chariot at a distance, driving very fast home, followed by Rover. Although they do not receive visitors, or make visits in the neighbourhood at present, I'll warrant you they will be well acquainted with all the sick and poor people for miles round.

We have a beautiful little Protestant chapel, that is to be, erecting here on the grounds; it is but just begun, but the marquis says he means to spend all his summers here, as long as my lady likes the place. And I am sure she will like any place he likes and where he is. What a blessing for people to marry those they love! But the carriage stops at the door, and the servants are already there, to receive my lord and lady, so they will be upstairs in a moment. There it is—my bell rings, and I fly to my lady.

I remain, dear Mrs. O'Connell, hoping this will find you well, as it leaves me,

Your affectionate friend and former fellow-servant,

MARY WALTER.

P.S. Oh, my dear Mrs. O'Connell, my lady has just told me that the opposition to the Protestant chapel we are building is so great from the Roman Catholics here, that the labourers on



it do their work in peril of their lives. The marquis, however, says that Frenchmen are not assassins, except under priestly influence, and that he will probe this persecution to the bottom ; for he is sure of finding some wretched priest or other working up the ignorant country-people against his chapel ; and if he cannot check this persecution otherwise, he will carry the matter before the highest tribunal in France. I should not say all this to you, dear Mrs. O'Connell, if I did not believe that in your heart you are a Protestant, although, for the sake of peace and security, you conform outwardly to the Romish church. I know, at any rate, that you read the Scriptures daily. May God give us both grace to learn from their perusal the way to heaven, though it should be a narrow and thorny road. Think of what our dear marchioness has suffered for the cause of the Bible, and let us also be steadfast, and labor to endure unto the end, that we may be saved.

MARY.

THE END.



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